Ravi Narayan Reddy

HEROIC TELENGANA

Reminiscences & Experiences

COMMUNIST PARTY PUBLICATION

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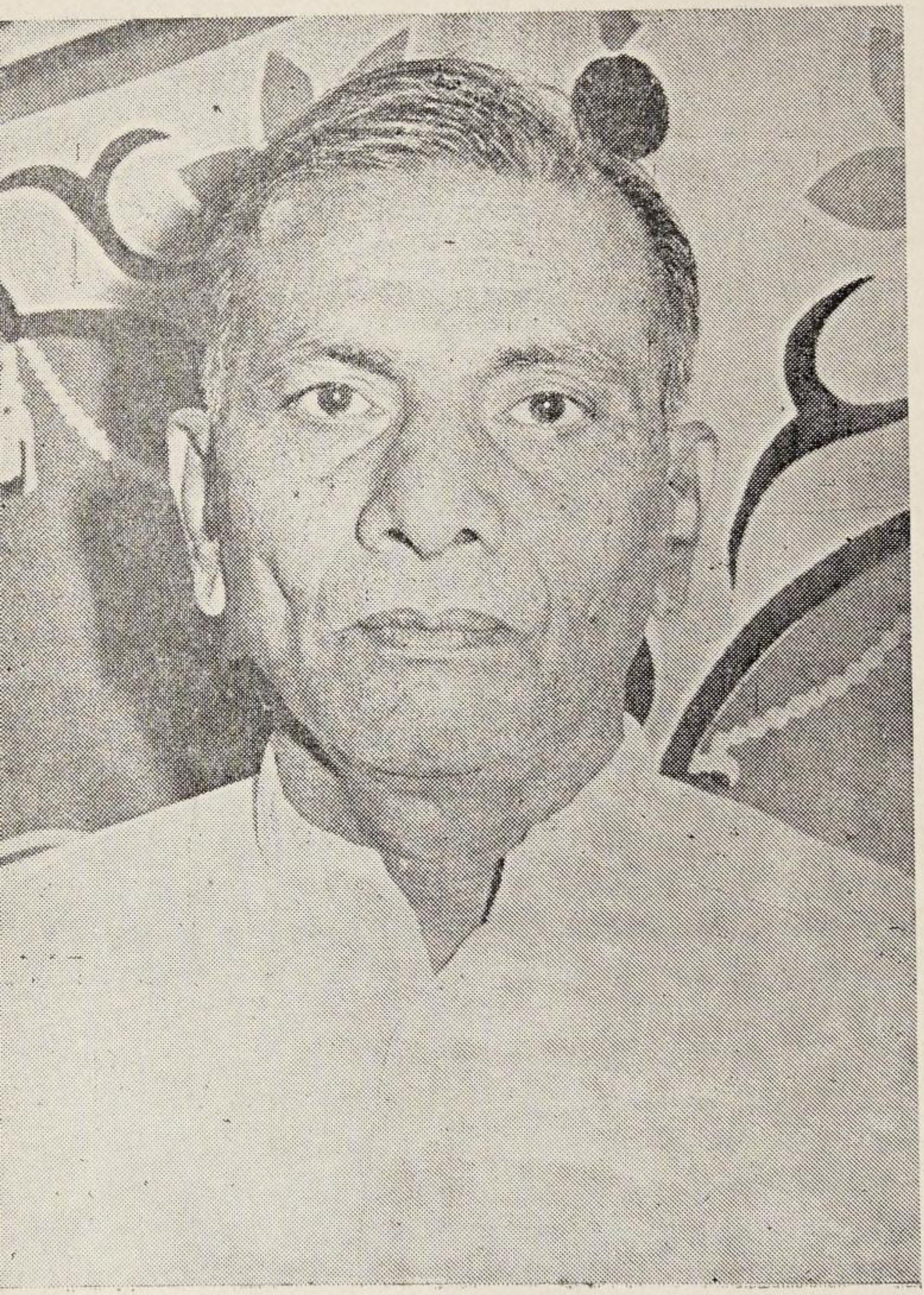

HEROIC TĒLENGANA

Reminiscences & Experiences

By
RAVI NARAYAN REDDY

Foreword by
C. RAJESWARA RAO

COMMUNIST PARTY PUBLICATION

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FOREWORD

This book is written by Comrade Ravi Narayan Reddy, one of the topmost leaders of the famous Telengana armed struggle (1946-51). In this book he has dealt with the entire cultural and political movement in the erstwhile Hyderabad state with particular reference to Telengana for over a period of forty years.

Comrade Ravi Narayan Reddy was one of the tallest leaders of the cultural and national movements in the former Hyderabad state and Telengana and later of the Communist Party in Telengana and Andhra Pradesh. He played a great role in the Andhra Mahasabha, State Congress and communist movements along with such stalwart colleagues as Comrades Baddam Yella Reddy, Makhdoom Mohiuddin, Raj Bahadur Gour, A. Lakshminarasimha Reddy, A. Ramanathan and Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao. He headed the left group in the State Congress which was quite strong in Telengana and was mainly instrumental in bringing the entire group into the CPI in 1940. It is not an exaggeration to say that his long political career is so intimately connected with the political movements in Telengana that in a way it can be said his life-story is itself the movement. Hence he is the fittest person to write about the cultural and political movements of the people of Telengana.

The merit of this book is that his experience and reminiscences are given a lucid style, so that the reader will find it interesting.

The first chapter of the book deals with the fullfledged feudal socioeconomic setup of Hyderabad state in a picturesque way. In the second chapter he has described the birth of Andhra Maha-

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sabha, the cultural and political organisation of the Telengana people, and its activities in the early stage. In the third chapter he gives the story of the emergence of the State Congress of which he was one of the top leaders. In the fourth chapter he deals with the birth of the Communist Party in Hyderabad state, particularly in Telengana.

Chapters five to eight deal with the struggle for the overthrow of the hated rule of the nizam and the heroic Telengana struggle. These chapters are very lively and inspiring because he describes a number of famous armed actions which the guerilla squads carried out against the fascist razakar hordes and the armed forces of the nizam. Here he has not only narrated the heroic part of the struggle but also mentioned the political mistakes that were committed in the course of the struggle. He has drawn valuable lessons from them, substantiated with facts. One weakness in this part is that the last stage of the Telengana armed struggle, when the squads retreated and spread the movement to the forest areas, is not dealt with at all.

In chapter nine he deals with the 1952 general election in which the Communist Party of India won a resounding victory in Telengana. He also narrates an interesting episode regarding the birth of bhoodan movement in Telengana when Vinoba Bhave toured the area.

In chapter ten he has ably dealt with the formation of Andhra Pradesh, the 1969 separate Telengana movement and the deep-seated roots of separatism which were utilised by the reactionary and opportunist politicians like Chenna Reddy for the breakup of the Andhra Pradesh and nullification of the hard-won unity of four-crore Telugu people.

In the two concluding chapters, Comrade Ravi Narayan Reddy has given an account of his native village where he tried to build the communist movement and the constructive programme he has at present undertaken to help the people of the village.

Before concluding I feel it is my duty to refer to two points that may arise in the reader's mind. First is the controversial point regarding the withdrawal of the Telengana armed struggle.

The author has stated quite frankly in his book and argued out his case that it should have been withdrawn after the entry of the Indian troops into the state and other tactics should have been adopted to defend the gains of the Telengana armed struggle. He was one of the few leaders who had the courage to state his view at that time itself. But his view was not accepted by the Andhra state leadership under the conditions of a thoroughly sectarian and adventurist line that was being pursued by the party at that time. Very recently the Andhra Pradesh unit of our party reviewed the Telengana armed struggle on the occasion of its silver jubilee and came to the same conclusion.

The second point is about the land distribution during the course of the Telengana armed struggle. A slander campaign was launched against Comrade Ravi Narayan Reddy by some people who are in the leadership of the state unit of the CPM that he was against land distribution. The Telengana armed struggle has two aspects—one, the national-liberation aspect and the other, the agrarian aspect. We can get a proper idea of the struggle only if we realise the importance of both these aspects. The first one gives the movement width and the other gives it depth. Hence one cannot be separated from the other. Comrade Ravi Narayan Reddy has brought out both these aspects in their proper perspective and what he has pointed out is that the thoroughly sectarian line of the Calcutta Party Congress had its own impact on the land distribution programme also which antagonised some landed sections who were in the antinizam front. One can argue about it that he has not given proper emphasis on this aspect. But he cannot be charged with opposing the land distribution programme altogether. It is not out of place to state in this connection that when the land distribution programme was being conducted by the party during the course of the struggle, he voluntarily donated 500 acres of land out of his property which was distributed to the poor peasants and agricultural labourers of his village.

I conclude this foreword with the author's closing sentences which give the main achievement of his long political career :

"I had a good opportunity to render service to the people in Hyderabad state. When I entered politics, Hyderabad state

was politically a barren land, unexposed to leftist politics. Therefore I had the opportunity to plough this land. I believe, in this endeavour I have achieved good results."

Now that this valuable book is available to English-knowing readers, I hope they will find it very useful in getting to know facts about the historic armed struggle of Telengana.

17 July 1973 C. RAJESWARA RAO

1. HYDERABAD STATE

Hyderabad state was the biggest among all the princely states in India. Its population was one crore sixty lakhs. All the princely states were of the same mould with a few exceptions like Mysore and Travancore, which were different from the rest.

Linguistically the state of Hyderabad could be divided into three regions—Telengana, Marathwada and Karnataka. Forty per cent of these regions was governed by jagirs. Among them there were jagirs with an annual income of even forty lakh rupees and at this rate the nizam was also a kind of big jagirdar. Areas adjoining Hyderabad known as Atraf Balda and twenty talukas in different districts together came to be known as sarf-e-khas for purposes of personal expenditure of the nizam.

Eighty-eight per cent of the population was Hindu and the rest included Muslims, Christians and others.

There was a legislative council whose members were all practically nominated by the nizam. Two representatives were elected from among the jagirdars with an annual income of six thousand rupees and more. Two representatives were elected by the first-grade lawyers.

The executive and judiciary were mutually interdependent in their functioning although they appeared to be separate from each other. There could be no going back on the firman of the nizam and in a word it was an unadulterated autocratic monarchy.

Civil liberties were utterly unthinkable for the people of Hyderabad. Freedom of the press was totally absent. The *Golconda Patrika* had to be so named because of refusal of permission by the government to the use of the word 'Andhra'. About a dozen

Urdu dailies functioned under the patronage of the nizam. Cabinet approval was necessary not only for bringing out any Telugu newspaper but also for their contents.

With freedom of the press in such a bad shape the right to hold public meetings and organise associations was denied. Andhra Mahasabha meetings were not normally possible in a situation where permission of the cabinet was required to hold ordinary meetings. Eventually satyagraha had to be resorted to for the establishment of the State Congress.

Urdu was the language of the administration. There were no schools with Telugu, Marathi and Kannada as media of instruction whereas Urdu was the sole medium even in primary schools. Osmania University was established with the aim of imparting higher education and it earned the reputation of being the only one of its kind in India with Urdu as the medium of instruction at the degree level. But it would be incorrect to say that this was done to develop Urdu. While we were not against the development of Urdu, the fact of the matter was that the majority of people in the state just did not know Urdu. If the nizam was genuinely interested in the development of Urdu he could have liberally contributed to the establishment of colleges and universities in those regions of the country where Urdu was known to the people. Such a course would not have hurt any one.

The founding of the university was not motivated by love and patronage of the language; it was a political conspiracy to suppress the Telugu, Marathi and Kannada languages of the people and to produce clerks for the administration.

With the establishment of the university in 1918, institutions with Urdu as medium of instruction were granted affiliation whereas it was not possible to secure affiliation for institutions with any other language as the medium. The Girls' High School in Narayanguda was started with Telugu as the medium of instruction and when the university was approached to be the examining authority it refused to grant this request. It had to be affiliated to the Karve Women's University at Poona.

This hostile attitude towards people's languages was carried to a ridiculous point. The ruling class looked on Telugu as a god-forsaken language which had no head and tail (in Urdu 'telangi,

bedhangi') whereas due to its sweetness it is known as the 'Italian of the East'.

I passed matriculation in 1927 at a time when there were fifteen high schools in the entire state and literacy was about three to five per cent. It is no exaggeration to say that there were no high schools at all in some districts and the students numbered only in hundreds. Even these limited opportunities were not available in jagir and sarf-e-khas areas. My village was situated in the Sharkhi or East Taluka of Atraf Balda district under sarf-e-khas rule. Though its population was two thousand, which was big by the standards of that period, my village did not have a primary school. When the authorities were approached for the purpose of opening a primary school, we were told to contact the khalsa (government) authorities as the nizam was not concerned with education.

In religious matters the nizam's rule exhibited partiality. Once, when Moharram and Dassehra festivals were on the same day, the former was allowed to be celebrated on a big scale whereas Dassehra celebrations were banned. The government did not act as rudely towards Christians as towards Hindus, not because of any sympathy but due to its fear of and loyalty to the British who were also Christians !

Some jagirdars exercised dual powers in as much as they had both judicial and police functions. In fact they possessed all powers in their areas. In most jagirs there was no land settlement worth the name. The cultivator remained a permanent tenant with no patta rights on the land.

The all-powerful jagirdars never lived in their native place. These absentee landlords collected 25 to 50 per cent more revenue than the khalsa (government) villages and through this naked exploitation lived a life of luxury in cities like Hyderabad and Bombay.

The power structure was a pyramid with the British imperialists on top, next to them the nizam and under this puppet, a line of puppets—jagirdars, zamindars, deshmukhs, deshpandes, patels and patwaris. Down below, crushed by the weight of all these

persons, were the people of Telengana. Local officials in the good books of these puppets helped them and all of them competed in exploiting the people.

A normal feature of feudalism is forced labour. The victims of this system were mostly village artisans and harijans. Officials on tour extorted labour from different people. Sometimes a nominal reward was given as rice-bran when paddy was pounded, although this was inadequate. A system of rotation from family to family in providing free labour developed with the show of force by the authorities and landlords. Transmitting letters to other villages, carrying of various articles and belongings, cleaning of lamps and lighting them, preparing beds for landlords and massaging their feet were all part of this obnoxious system. Wedding in the landlord's family and house-building called for labour from all sections of village population. Not even the twiceborn and superior caste of brahmins were exempt from this practice! They had to stitch platters made of leaves for the landlords. A vivid description of the forced labour system is given in Vettikota Alwarswami's novel *Prajala Manishi* ('Man of the People').

Small disputes are quite normal among people in villages. The parties to a dispute paid a dispute tax to the landlord and also a bribe for settlement of the same. This tax chases men even to their cremation which otherwise would be a permanent release from this burden. The body cannot be reduced to ashes unless a tax is paid.

Visit of officials to villages led to the consumption of sheep, chicken, lamb, etc. and free supply of provisions from shops was a must. A portion went to the landlord whenever anyone butchered a goat for his own use. The villagers contributed through a cess to the construction of a house, buying of a car, celebration of a marriage in the landlord's household. Along with these penal levies the people were subject to many cruel punishments like running in front of the landlord's cart, standing in the sun for hours with heavy stones on the back etc.

Money had great value and the moneylenders were themselves village officers. Taxation was so heavy that people were unable to pay and gave up their lands. The purchasing power of the people

fell precipitously during the world economic crisis of 1927-36. Money almost disappeared. People sold lands at ridiculously low prices in order to pay taxes, clear debts and maintain their families. And in this manner they lost lakhs of acres of land. A case I know would illustrate the frightening picture of the crisis.

In 1931 a poor peasant sold me his entire plot of two-acre wet land for literally twenty-five rupees to save his family—in spite of my efforts to persuade him not to do so. Of course I gave back this land to his son-in-law after two years without demanding the twenty-five rupees. I mention this only to show how great was the suffering and struggle of the people.

Thus the whole process led to concentration of land with the landlords. By the time the crisis was on the way out, lakhs of acres of land were in the hands of a few persons.

My student life began in such a situation of crisis. The landlords' exploitation of the people and their mute sufferings pained me and evoked a feeling of disgust. I was looking forward to an opportunity to serve and liberate them from this oppression.

After completing my education in Chaderghat High School, I joined the Nizam College and its scouts. The student of those days in the college could not smell politics and no students' union ever existed. The lack of opportunities for doing any service made me feel miserable. I was afraid that the college being virtually a prison would kill my creative ideas, and this led me to the field of sports. I decided to become a good sportsman and participated in intercollegiate competitions. I became a sports champion and took part in All-India Olympic Competitions. This earned me the reputation of being a good sportsman.

In 1929 my study of Gandhian literature began and I liked Gandhiji's autobiography. Anti-imperialist ideas in it attracted me and my regard for Gandhism increased. The dormant desire in me to serve the people began to take shape.

The civil disobedience movement of 1930 was reaching new heights through satyagraha under the leadership of the Congress. But this had no impact on our state. However it had an echo among a few young men who were sad at their inability to con-

duct a similar struggle. This movement of a national character could not move the liberal leadership in the state.

In these circumstances a hundred patriotic young men under the leadership of Dr Chelikani Rama Rao went out of the state and participated in the satyagraha movement. Dr Rama Rao was from Ramachandrapuram in East Godavari district and was studying at the Medical College in Hyderabad. He was of great help in our developing political ideas. He was in charge of the satyagraha camp at Kakinada and under his leadership, among others, I and Baddam Yella Reddy offered satyagraha.

I returned to my village Bollepalli from Kakinada inspired and established a khadi centre where young men took part in spinning and weaving. The charkha or the spinning wheel was not only a national symbol but also of anti-imperialism.

Nehru's autobiography, his *Glimpses of World History* and other writings on socialism and the birth of Soviet Union attracted me. Although I was under the influence of Gandhism, now these works gave rise to socialist ideas. I found Nehru's views against fascism and on the birth of the socialist world highly commendable. It appeared to me that he had doubts about the practical application of his ideas and objectives. Views expressed in the *Discovery of India* are a step backwards when compared to his previous works and speeches. It is likely that he was influenced to some extent by rightist leaders like Patel and Rajendra Prasad. All the same Nehru's earlier writings continued to inspire me. Similarly Jayaprakash Narayan's book *Why Socialism?* and his paper *Congress Socialist* used to enthuse me. He was a prominent socialist intellectual of that period and propagated his views through his writings. Now he has given up socialism and turned into a sarvodayite.

During those days I came across *Moscow Dialogues*, a book that contained questions and answers on problems of Marxism. This book sharpened my thinking and on the whole this was a significant stage in the development of my political consciousness.

Before this transformation, Gandhiji was in Yeravada jail in 1932 at a time when the communal award had been announced. According to this separate electorates were to function—harijan representatives to be elected only by harijans. Gandhiji opposed this award and went on hungerstrike demanding its abolition.

Later on it was decided that harijan representatives would be elected by all the people which was a result of the agreement between Gandhiji and Ambedkar. Soon after his release from Yeravada prison Gandhiji took up the harijan movement.

For generations caste Hindus have suppressed the harijans in every way and treated them as untouchables. As a recompense to this, Gandhiji established the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh comprising wholly of caste Hindus and formulated a programme of service among harijans. G. D. Birla was president and Thakkar Bapa was general secretary of this organisation. Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao was president of the Andhra branch and Maganti Bapineedu its secretary. Maharashtrian leader Vaman Naik and I were appointed as president and secretary of the Hyderabad branch.

Programmes of the sangh included propaganda among people about eradication of untouchability, creating a feeling of equality through community (mixed) dining and spreading literacy among harijans. We established a hundred schools in the state for harijans and also hostels which included one in Hyderabad and another in Bhid. In spite of such efforts for their education, conditions did not exist for harijans to utilise them. To cite an instance, at the time of Gandhiji's visit to Hyderabad, I donated two thousand rupees to this harijan fund by selling the jewellery of my first wife, (late) Meenamma. On our request the sangh opened a school in my village making use of the donation. But this school had to be closed after some time as the number of students dwindled from thirty to two within two months and eventually no one remained because food was the more immediate problem than education and knowledge for harijans who have been suffering from poverty for generations and labour was more useful than education. This is true even now when we are celebrating the silver jubilee of our independence.

This was the condition of schools in all villages whereas it was a little better in towns. Generally twenty to thirty students lived in hostels and these institutions did not face financial difficulties as the expenditure was shared equally by the central organisation and the state unit for which we made the collections.

Till my joining the State Congress in 1938, I was president of the State Harijan Sevak Sangh and prior to that for two years

I was its secretary. Frequent meetings of the national body were held in Delhi where Gandhiji addressed us. Two types of opinion prevailed in its committees. Some were totally with Gandhiji and others agreed with him only on a few issues. I belonged to the second group.

Fishermen from Bengal wanting to establish a cooperative society requested financial aid from Harijan Sevak Sangh. They are considered to be harijans. An argument was put forth that fish-catching is a violent act and such violence should not be given financial help. We argued that the fishermen were harijans and fish-catching was their profession and therefore financial assistance should be given. It would not be possible to impose our mental predilections on the people and eliminate their profession. Ultimately the decision was left to Gandhiji who announced that no aid be given to the fishermen.

Gandhiji agreed to tour Hyderabad for a fund-raising campaign and devote one day in April 1934 for this purpose. A reception committee with Vaman Naik as chairman and I as the secretary was formed to arrange his programme and accompany him. Gandhiji was to inaugurate a khadi bhandar at Charkaman in the morning and when we reached the place the nizam's police confronted us with an order banning its opening. This made him angry and he cancelled all engagements for the day. This event conveys the sad state of civil liberties in Hyderabad.

Thakkar Bapa pleaded with Gandhiji to go ahead with the other programme as he had come here not for defence of civil liberties but for collections to the harijan fund. At last he relented and went ahead with the collection drive in the remaining part of the day and as far as I remember twenty thousand rupees were collected.

There was a great deal of religious discrimination in the state which the ruling class considered to be a Muslim state. Muslims were given preference and prominence in employment. An organisation called Anjuman-e-Tabligh-ul-Islam functioned with the aim of proselytisation, particularly of poor harijans and other backward classes. It received all help and assistance from the nizam. In order to counteract this activity the Arya Samaj established a 'shuddhi sabha' to purify and convert Muslims into Hinduism.

As a result of the activities of these two organisations communal tension and incidents increased in the state. Consequently the nizam's government banned both the organisations.

The Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen existed and functioned as a social and cultural body. After the ban on the Tabligh organisation its president Bahadur Yar Jung joined the Majlis and became its president and transformed it into a political organisation. Declaring that Asafjahi rule was a symbol of Muslim power he called upon every Muslim to defend it and infused communalism into politics of the state. Every Muslim is a king—thus he invoked the theory of 'Anal Malik' (I am the king!). Muslims were rulers and people of other religions were only the ruled.

In the hope of liberating themselves from the oppression of high-caste Hindus, harijans and other poor people in the villages got converted to Islam during the campaign carried on by the Anjuman-e-Tabligh-ul-Islam. They were enticed into this action with promises of land, employment and a better future. A significant political motivation of the movement was to increase the proportion of Muslim population. Harijan Sevak Sangh, Andhra Mahasabha and Arya Samaj opposed this forced conversion of people. The Arya Samaj launched a big movement against this proselytisation and it reconverted the people to Hinduism after shuddhi. For their own reasons the landlords also opposed the conversion movement. They were apprehensive that harijans who engaged in forced labour under them traditionally would not do so after conversion to Islam as they would consider themselves petty rulers! An event in this connection is noteworthy.

In the village of Arutla brothers—Kolanpaka—harijans who were converted to Islam by the Tabligh organisation were reconverted by the Arya Samaj. Bellamkonda Lingayya, a peasant, opposed the conversion movement. Could there be a greater crime! The Muslim police subinspector of the village arrested Lingayya on the charge of abusing the ruler. We proved that the charges were against all canons of law and justice. I was present in the village. The subinspector argued that there was a printing mistake in that particular portion of the law. Our objection was upheld by the magistrate of Bhongir who had jurisdiction over Kolanpaka village. He even reprimanded the subinspector for his unlawful action. However he did not order the outright release of Lingayya who

was asked to restrict himself to Bhongir town. Mandumula Ramchandra Rao argued our case. At this stage we went on appeal to the High Court with Burgula Ramakrishna Rao as our lawyer. The High Court struck down the case and granted full freedom to Lingayya. This event received tremendous publicity all over the country. The attention of national leaders including Gandhiji was drawn towards this problem of proselytisation. With this ended the nefarious game of the Tabligh organisation. All those who had become Muslims through conversion were reconverted to Hinduism.

2. ANDHRA MAHASABHA

It was 1922. A Hindu social conference was held in the Viveka Vardhini Theatre where all the speeches were in Urdu and Marathi. Only one speaker tried to speak in Telugu but he was hooted and shouted down. The number of Maharashtrians in Hyderabad city was small, yet they exhibited their superiority in all walks of life. Telugu language did not get any respect and recognition; this sad state of affairs has been depicted in detail by Madapati Hanumantha Rao in his *History of Andhra Mahasabha.*

A few elders, having seen the insults to Telugu and the speaker in that meeting, established the Andhra Jana Sangham with the objective of securing a proper place for Telugu language and culture in Hyderabad city. This was the beginning of the Andhra movement in the state. After two years a central organisation of all Telugu associations in the state was formed which met annually and discussed problems of development of Telugu language and culture. It helped Telugu organisations in the state by sending representatives, Madapati Hanumantha Rao was its secretary.

Two important leaflets, *Forced Labour, Merchants' Association* were brought out. They made the people aware of the fact that forced labour and sarbarahi or free supply of articles to officials by merchants were against government regulations. Andhra Jana Sangham organised merchants' associations and carried on campaigns against sarbarahi.

I participated in a meeting of Merchants' Association at Chandur village in Nalgonda district while I was a student of Nizam College. Police objected to this meeting but I strongly argued that it was a private gathering and not a public meeting. They yielded but the merchants who took part were still frightened. In the early days of the Andhra movement, merchants' associations

were formed in many areas and they played a prominent role in organising its activities. Feudalism acts as an obstacle to the development of capitalism and therefore it was unavoidable for the then growing capitalism to resist oppressive feudal exploitation. And these associations played a significant part in this.

The ruling class used to obstruct establishment of libraries, normal management of existing ones and meetings on their behalf. Permission had to be obtained from the home minister even for very minor activities. They devised strict measures to prevent the people from being influenced by the gigantic struggle for freedom outside the state. Probably the misforturne of filing petition before the rulers for every minor activity could have been avoided if the influence of the national movement had spread here!

Along with the rigidity of the rulers the level of consciousness among the youth was very low. All this was painful to me.

Under the auspices of Andhra Jana Sangham, various scattered movements for the revitalisation of Telugu language and culture and against the feudal oppression joined like a confluence of streams in a big river. The First Andhra Mahasabha Conference was held at Jogipet in 1930. It was presided over by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy. There were no definite set of rules and regulations and anyone could become a delegate by paying a rupee. Fifteen of us including Arutla Ramachandra Reddy went to the conference on cycles as volunteers. I was captain of this volunteer squad.

Discussions were mainly on social problems. Resolutions were adopted on child and widow marriage. I also participated in some of the discussions. Maharashtrian leader Vaman Naik was the chief participant in this conference.

That people were not yet sufficiently conscious is borne out by an incident at the conference. When a delegate, Bhagya Reddy, a harijan leader, was to speak, some merchants staged a walkout. All said and done traditionalists had an upper hand in this first conference.

The second conference was held in 1931 at Devarkonda under

the presidentship of Burgula Ramakrishna Rao. By then the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had been signed. Fifteen of us students walked 74 miles and on our way carried on propaganda in the villages. Social issues occupied a predominant position even in this conference. We mobilised a good number of delegates to argue strongly on these problems, and the conference could not but recognise the existence of youth.

Whereas in the first conference Vaman Naik played a vital role, another Maharashtrian leader Keshava Rao attended this conference and both were engaged in serious arguments. Keshava Rao was a reformist. Efforts of the youth led to the defeat of traditionalists.

As in the first conference, most of the delegates spoke in Telugu and with the defeat of ritualists a Telugu spirit was manifest. Resolutions were in the nature of prayer and petition. At last the efforts of Andhra Jana Sangham succeeded to some extent.

Government's attention turned towards Andhra Mahasabha after the second conference and it was becoming difficult to secure permission for holding conferences. It took three years to obtain permission for the third conference which was held in Khammam (then part of Warangal district) in 1934 under the presidentship of Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao. Along with government's delay in granting permission, some conservatives and a few lawyers of Warangal and Khammam not only obstructed but also wrote to the government that a danger of bloodshed existed if the draft resolutions were allowed to be adopted in the conference. This gave a pretext to the government to impose severe restrictions. It demanded that the presidential address and draft resolutions be shown and the deletion of parts not to the liking of the government. The rightist leadership organising the conference accepted these insulting conditions and yielded to all the restrictions imposed by the district collector. Andhra Mahasabha had to bear these insults due to the rightists and traditionalists who wanted to hold the conference anyhow without hurting the government.

Along with every Andhra Mahasabha conference, a women's conference was also customary. Resolutions prohibited by the government were introduced in the women's conference which frightened the traditionalists who were also loyalists. They

brought pressure from the collector for the withdrawal of the resolutions but Madapati Hanumantha Rao did not yield and the women's conference adopted them.

The fourth conference held at Sircilla was presided over by Madapati Hanumantha Rao. It functioned in the same manner as in the past in approving resolutions on different subjects. Nevertheless, leader of Andhra movement, Madapati Hanumantha Rao as the president and his wife Manikyamma, presiding over the women's conference, gave it a special character. As there was no constitution, the previous conference had appointed a subcommittee to prepare one, which it presented before this conference. This was also something unusual.

Many persons had begun to speak in Telugu by the time the Devarkonda conference was held although the primacy of Maharashtrian leaders prevailed earlier. This healthy development assumed an aggressive form in Sircilla. Angry at the injustice done to Telugu language and culture in the nizam's state and eager to fight it, a few young language enthusiasts succeeded in incorporating in the constitution clauses that made it obligatory for all speeches, records, etc. to be in Telugu only. No one need doubt their good objective but extremism that overlooks reality can only lead to consequences different from the desired aims. Such undesirable consequences were to be seen prominently in the fifth and sixth conferences.

Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy presided over the fifth conference held at Shadnagar. There was nothing in the resolutions deserving special mention. As usual Maharashtrian and Karnatak leaders sat on the dais but they did not get an opportunity to say anything due to the extremist provision adopted in the fourth conference. They had to return even without giving any message to the conference.

The sixth conference was held at Nizamabad in 1937 and Mandumula Narsing Rao presided. The ill-effects of the extremists' clause in the constitution came out into the open. Two Maharashtrian leaders Kasinath Rao Mukhapalkar and Maulvi Ghulam Bhashani were members of the reception committee and

also elected to the subjects committee of the conference. Their attempt to speak in languages other than Telugu were obstructed by extremists under the leadership of Nandagiri Venkat Rao on the plea that clause 31 of the constitution prohibits speeches in any other language. Severe arguments and counter-arguments took place in the subjects committee. These two members had the right to participate in the conference under clause 2 but clause 31 nullified this right. At this stage I intervened in the discussion supported by Burgula Ramakrishna Rao. As the chair could not give any ruling the matter was left to the conference for a decision. The subjects committee by a majority of two permitted Kasinath Rao and Bhashani to speak which dissatisfied the extremists; they moved an adjournment motion with 85 signatures on the plea that proceedings of the conference were against the constitution.

According to the movers of this motion nobody could speak in the conference if he did not know Telugu. Opposing this I pointed out that they were rejecting the right of Andhra people to participate in the conference. It was a Andhra Mahasabha and not Andhra language conference. If Gandhiji wished to address the conference he would not have the opportunity due to the restrictive clause. Further, how could the secretary correspond with the nizam's government? Delegates applauded at this poser and the extremists' resolution was defeated. Among those who supported the resolution were prominent persons like Suravaram Pratap Reddy, Valluri Basava Raju and Nandagiri Venkat Rao. The dislike and disgust of the extremists for the rightist leadership was too obvious. A significant suggestion was made to the Ayyangar committee for the establishment of responsible government in the state. This committee had been appointed by the nizam's government with Diwan Bahadur Aravamulu Aiyangar to suggest political reforms in the state. A brief description of the background to the committee's appointment would be useful.

People in India were carrying on many struggles for political independence. Leaders were released from prison and the Government of India Act of 1935 was to be implemented after the Round Table Conference. The nizam realised that some reforms were necessary in this atmosphere without which the future may be difficult. He appointed the Aiyangar committee for this pur-

pose. The conference passed a political resolution for the first time and made suggestions to the committee. Till then leaders of Andhra Mahasabha claimed they had nothing to do with politics but the sixth conference gave it political prestige. It cannot be said, however, that the previous conferences were without any political influence. Movements with political and nonpolitical differences do not have special forms. Moreover it is unscientific to draw a line between the political and the nonpolitical in conferences held in social, economic and political conditions under nizam's rule. In spite of the leaders disclaiming any connection with politics under conditions of total absence of political liberties and the conference being held with great difficulty while obeying the existing laws, the political significance in the very birth of Andhra movement cannot be overlooked. Andhra movement was a small light whose glow radiated into all four corners of the state which were in total darkness. It showed a path to the people.

In this conference, I and Mandumula Ramachandra Rao were elected as secretaries.

In 1940 the seventh conference was held at Malkapur in Hyderabad district under the presidentship of Mandumula Ramachandra Rao. Satyagraha movement of the State Congress had commenceed in 1938 in which a number of young Andhra Mahasabha workers took part. Consequently there was delay in holding the Andhra Mahasabha conference. Meanwhile the Aiyangar committee submitted its report to the government. It suggested functional representation under which jagirdars and zamindars as well as peasants would be represented. A large majority, like the peasantry, were given the same representation as that for a microscopic minority—zamindars and merchants. In all probability the committee might have adopted 'functional representation' from the nazis and Hitler.

The second world war was in full swing and Hitler's nazi hordes were advancing in their plunder of Europe. In the midst of this intensification of imperialist war and world transformation, I joined the Communist Party at the end of 1939.

The Communist Party was then functioning secretly. Therefore the Andhra Mahasabha leaders did not know that I was a communist. Main resolution for discussion at this conference

was on constitutional reforms. Following is an actual account of the discussion on the resolution from Madapati Hanumantha Rao's *Andhrodyamam* :

"The constitutional reforms announced by the government on 19 July 1939 were not only severely condemned but a resolution was introduced to boycott these useless and reactionary reforms. An amendment was moved by the rightist leaders for the deletion of the portion 'should boycott'. After reasonable arguments from both sides, the resolution was put to vote and adopted by an overwhelming majority while the amendment was lost.

"It will be useful to know the names of those who spoke in favour of the resolution and also those who talked about the necessity of amending the resolution. I will mention them. Sri Ravi Narayan Reddy, a man with bright ideas, moved the resolution. Sri N. K. Rao, Kaloji Narayana Rao, late Polakampalli Venkat Rama Rao approved it. The amendment was moved by Mandumula Narsinga Rao. Those who spoke in favour were Sri Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy, Pulijala Venkat Ranga Rao, Madapati Hanumantha Rao. A look at the above names will make the representative nature of the two sides very obvious. Defeat of the amendment and adoption of the resolution and changes in the strength of the two sides on the platform of Andhra Mahasabha become too apparent. In essence the younger leadership had become strong at the time of seventh Andhra Mahasabha."

I presided over the eighth conference at Chilukur in Huzurnagar taluka in 1941. I was already a member of the Communist Party. As such my presidential address reflected the attitude of the party on issues. This conference was different from the previous ones in many respects. To make this clearer, I shall quote a portion from Madapati Hanumantha Rao's *Andhrodyamam* :

"Hearing the name of the chief leader of this conference, one cannot but think that Andhra leadership is following a new way. Sri Reddy has displayed enthusiasm right from his student days and helped and encouraged the Andhra movement in many ways. He participated in the satyagraha movement on behalf of the Hyderabad State Congress and underwent imprisonment for a number of months. It became very clear at the Malkapur conference that he emerged more radical than before. During the fol-

lowing one year, it appeared that he did not work in the Andhra movement with mental satisfaction. His heart was attracted by new ideas, ideologies and ideals (this in our opinion is the ideal of Marxist ideology); it looked as if he was moving along a new movement."

In my presidential address I commented upon a number of issues ranging from international problems, imperialist war, anti-imperialism to criticism of native states, women's freedom and local matters. Madapati Hanumantha Rao wrote thus about my speech :

"Shri Ravi Narayan Reddy's speech contained not only a discussion of the problems of the people of Telengana but also those that were never mentioned before in presidential speeches. World war and international situation, consequences of capitalist system and the necessity of a new order in its place, the unavoidable nature of women's selfreliance and freedom—these and other matters are revealed in his speech."

"Sri Reddy, in his presidential address, described this matter (Muslim problem—RNR) in a positive manner. Unfortunately some Muslim brethern in Hyderabad entertain strange dreams of all Muslims being rulers and that there is no ruler without Muslims. By displaying arrogance they have become the cause of sorrow to many. They want to be at ease and happy by attaining rights for themselves while looking with suspicion at others desiring political advancement. Ideas of religious bigotry and partiality and strange dreams of the Muslims in Hyderabad were at no time condemned in such clear terms."

During this period, the nizam's government turned its sights on me. Once I went on a tour of Nalgonda district, accompanied by the district president M. Narayan Reddy, a lawyer by profession. I rested in his house after the tour. Narayan Reddy had gone to the court and, on that day, I visited the political classes for students being conducted by Devulapalli Venkateswar Rao for some time past. The local police wrote to the home department to arrest me as I was a communist. But the home department wrote back that it would be hazardous to arrest the president of Andhra Mahasabha without any proof of his being a communist. Therefore the police went to every village during my tour to know more fully about me. Narayan Reddy was questioned. He told

them that he was with me on all eight days except on a day when he was in the court and that he was unaware of what happened. On that particular day I went to the political classes, held by Devulapalli Venkateswar Rao. The police wanted to get precisely this information so that they could arrest me. But they could not find sufficient evidence.

Hitherto workers did not have any programme to enthuse them after the conference. However, the character of the movement changed after the eighth Andhra Mahasabha. Formerly content with mere petitions, it changed into struggles on various issues. Programmes for such struggles were formulated on issues like 'Detenu Day', 'Education Week', 'Anti-Forced-Labour Week'. We took to educating the people and creating fighting capability among them.

During this intervening period the ban on the Communist Party was lifted and all party members began to work openly. Imperialist war got transformed into people's war. I too started functioning openly as a member of the Communist Party and president of Andhra Mahasabha.

In this conference, membership fee was reduced from one rupee to four annas, and clause 31 introduced by language extremists was deleted from the constitution. These are two significant events which brought membership of Andhra Mahasabha within the reach of the large majority of population and eliminated linguistic extremism. At the same time struggles against excessive taxation by jagirdars were begun in Kolanpaka, Puligilla and other areas.

The ninth conference was held at Dharmavaram in Warangal taluka in 1942. Madiraju Rama Koteswara Rao was its president. Seventh and eighth conferences turned out to be very favourable to us but due to organisational weakness, the presidentship had to be handed over to Madiraju, a rightist among rightists. Concentration on the Communist Party led to lack of increased attention towards Andhra Mahasabha. As a result, in spite of favourable conditions, the leadership fell into the hands of rightists. The conference ended in an extremely unenthusiastic atmosphere. These organisational weaknesses continued to follow us in one form or the other up to the tenth conference.

The tenth conference was held in Hyderabad in 1943 which was unique, for all the previous conferences were held in rural areas. Dr Jaisoorya, son of Sarojini Naidu, was chairman of the reception committee. There was a contest for the presidentship of the conference between Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy and Baddam Yella Reddy. Baddam Yella Reddy was a communist leader who spent a long period in the British and nizam jails. His contestant, Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy, was a reactionary and an extreme rightist. The reactionaries conspired and adopted all possible tactics to capture the leadership somehow. They were able to win with a narrow majority. Our organisational weakness was again responsible for the defeat of Yella Reddy.

The most important resolution before the tenth conference called for the establishment of a people's government with all powers in Hyderabad, at least temporarily, during the war. On behalf of the Communist Party we proposed that half of the seats in such a government should be allotted to the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and the remaining half be given to representatives of Andhra, Maharashtra and Karnataka conferences. After prolonged discussions, this motion was defeated through mobilisation of their strength by the rightwing leaders.

However the history of the Majlis has proved in many ways that we were wrong in making such a proposition. In spite of this people's respect for the Communist Party did not decrease. The party's popularity among the people not only did not decrease but increased manifold as a result of organisational grit, strivings and sacrifices for the solution of people's problems.

Communist workers undertook struggles on the land problem. Some prominent workers of Suryapet were expelled from the Andhra Mahasabha by the leadership of Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy for participating in such struggles.

The eleventh conference was held at Bhongir in 1944. Our organisational weaknesses were too obvious at the tenth conference; therefore, we worked hard with great determination to eliminate such defects. Thousands of members were enrolled and hundreds of committees were organised. We strove to transform the Andhra Mahasabha into a powerful people's movement. The

party worked day and night to resolve many of the people's problems arising out of war conditions. Hundreds of workers came forward to devote their entire time for the programmes and organisation of Andhra Mahasabha. This made the rightist leaders panicky. They thought of driving out the communists from Andhra Mahasabha with the help of the formal majority that they had. With the support of powerful movements built by it, the Communist Party was determined to defeat the rightist leaders. The latter recognised the possibility of a communist victory and certainty of their own utter defeat in the event of an election. They were in a state of great confusion and tried their best to postpone the elections. But they could not do so. In such a situation with no alternative, they decided to leave Andhra Mahasabha.

In these conditions I was unanimously elected president. This conference had a distinct character in respect of people's mobilisation and created fear in the hearts of the rightist leaders. Ten to twelve thousand people came to the conference, and good dining facilities for the delegates and other arrangements were made.

The conference made some more changes in the constitution. Keeping in tune with the mass character of the organisation, member ship fee was reduced from four annas to one anna.

Andhra Mahasabha which commenced its work by appeals and petitions to the government gradually evolved into a mass movement with fighting capabilities through the efforts of enthusiastic young men. This became absolutely clear at this conference. Rightist leaders, who had left the organisation earlier, now realised their mistake and also felt that their very existence was at stake. They regrouped all their scattered forces and established a rival organisation. Fantastic arguments were advanced to show that their organisation was the real one whereas the Bhongir conference was only a rival body. Since the latter was of the communists, they anticipated that it would attract no noncommunists. But their hopes did not come true. Kologi Narayan Rao, Polkampalli Venkat Rama Rao and others took part enthusiastically in the Bhongir conference. Refusing to yield to the pressure of the rightists, Raja Bahadur Venkat Rama Reddy also participated in the conference for two days.

Chandra Rajeswara Rao attended the conference and helped

immensely not only in the organisation and discussions but in making it a great success.

The Bhongir conference which demoralised the rightists and created great enthusiasm and determination among the youth turned the history of Telengana on to new paths. It left a deep impact on the struggle of the people of Hyderabad state.

The twelfth conference was held at Khammam in 1945 and was again presided over by me. Freedom struggle all over India was expanding rapidly and anti-imperialism had never reached a more serious stage. Struggles against landlords were held in Suryapet and Jangaon and political consciousness increased among people of Telengana. People realised that their problems could be solved only through struggles and not by remaining meek and submissive. There was a new awareness not only in Telengana but among people of all princely states in varying degrees.

The Khammam conference held at such a time reflected extensively the then political awareness of the people. Nearly forty thousand people visited the conference. The conference and discussions therein were conducted successfully in a disciplined manner. Cultural programmes reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the people created a new enthusiasm. Inspired by the conference, the people and workers turned to the sphere of active work.

After the conference the whole of Telengana was engulfed in struggles. It was not possible to hold annual conferences any more as workers concentrated all their energies and strength on these struggles as well as due to increased police restrictions and repression.

I remained president for a short time during this period when conferences could not be held. The standing committee was convened which elected Baddam Yella Reddy as president, and I functioned as secretary.

At this stage, while concluding the chapter on Andhra Mahasabha, I cannot but state my sincere views about Madapati Hanumantha Rao. The respect and credit for having laid the foundations of Andhra movement in Telengana goes to him in spite of his being a liberal and the snail-speed with which he organised it. The honour of making the people of Telengana learn Telugu and securing for it a respectable place belongs to him. Many a young

man like me got acquainted with Telugu literature under his influence. Although I had Urdu as second language in the high school, I changed over to Telugu in the college. I read Telugu books and treatises, and learnt to deliver speeches in Telugu. The title of 'Andhra Pitamaha' is a well-earned epithet. We have to remember his ceaseless efforts while looking at the fulfilment of the age-old dream of Andhras through the formation of Andhra Pradesh. Working along with him, I used to differ on a number of matters. But this only increased my regard for him, and to this day my respect and regard have not diminished in any way.

3. STATE CONGRESS

Reforms according to the Government of India Act of 1935 were implemented in the provinces. The influence of these ministries was too apparent on the politics of Hyderabad state. We in Telengana and persons like Swami Ramananda Tirtha and Govinddoss Shroff in Marathwada had the desire to establish the State Congress. And to this end we began preparations which the nizam's government did not like. It threatened to ban the State Congress if it was formed. To this threat we did not yield.

During this period I got acquainted with Swami Ramananda Tirtha. After consultations with all, we decided to launch a satyagraha movement if necessary for the establishment of the State Congress. For this purpose a preparatory committee was formed in which B. Ramakrishna Rao, myself, Kashinath Rao Vaidya, Sirajul Hasan Tirmiji, Ramakishen Dhoot and others were members.

Even the thought of satyagraha during those days of nizam's autocratic rule was something extraordinary. Nobody was aware of the type of cruel methods the government was likely to adopt towards satyagrahis. None could imagine the period of detention in prisons and the violent methods that may be adopted there. Except those with extraordinary courage and determination it was not possible for anyone to think of even satyagraha. In spite of these circumstances we decided to launch satyagraha. Problems about participation in the first batch of satyagrahis from Andhra, Maharashtra and Karnataka areas arose and also regarding persons who would shoulder this responsibility. Ramakrishna Rao did not agree to join the first batch although he was a member of the preparatory committee. None of the Telengana leaders had the courage to come forward to join the satyagraha in spite of our request. Inevitably I had to shoulder the responsibility of repre-

senting Telengana in the first batch. Govind Rao Nannal from Marathwada and Janardhan Rao Desai representing Karnataka joined the first batch. Ramkishen Dhoot represented the city of Hyderabad. Srinivas Rao Borekar, a young lawyer, was also included.

The first batch was formed in the following manner : president —Govind Rao Nannal. Nannalnagar in Hyderabad city is named after him. Second satyagrahi was Janardhan Rao Desai, third—Ramkishen Dhoot, fourth—Ravi Narayan Reddy and fifth—Srinivas Rao Borekar. This was the order in which the batch was formed.

In November 1938 this batch reached the telegraph office in Kothi after leaving Sultan Bazar followed by a huge procession of people. The people smothered us in flowers and gave us a grand send off. All of us had our statements ready. President Nannal read his statement first. The police arrested us immediately on the charge of defiance of prohibitory orders. Amidst the slogans of 'State Congress Zindabad !' ringing and reverberating from thousands of throats the first batch of satyagrahis moved ahead.

Police produced us before a magistrate. They were confused as they were not sure of under which section we were to be charge-sheeted. The government had merely threatened to ban the State Congress but it had not actually banned it by an order. We were under the impression that we were defying the government orders banning the State Congress. After consultations with the law department the police charged us with defying the order banning public meetings ('Gashti Nishan 53'). The magistrate offered to release us if we gave personal bonds. Nannal and Desai, both lawyers, agreed to get released by giving personal bonds. I opposed this vehemently. We had an argument on this before the magistrate himself. I argued that our being released on personal bonds would lead to the fizzling out of the movement and that the youth would not agree to this submissive attitude. The old lawyers argued that we could get released on personal bonds since the actual charge-sheet was different from what we had really defied. I requested the magistrate to send us to prison where we could quietly talk and resolve this matter. In this controversy Ramkishen Dhoot remained neutral and Srinivas Rao Borekar supported me.

At last an agreement was reached between us and the old lawyers. Instead of accepting or denying the charges we agreed to place only the facts as they were before the court and leave the judgement to the magistrate.

The magistrate tried the case in his chamber. We were seated on sofas and the police officers were standing. We made a statement merely giving out the facts and not going into the acceptance or denial of the charges. Sitting as we were it appeared as if we were the investigators and the police the accused. The magistrate began to cross-examine the police on our behalf. The police got the impression during this cross-examination that he wanted to let us out.

Having sensed this, the police managed to get the magistrate in no time transferred and a new one was brought to the court. Without much argument, the new magistrate sentenced us to two months' imprisonment and imposed a fine of two hundred rupees or in default another fifteen days. The people came to know about the arguments between me and the old lawyers in the court. They disliked and despised the old lawyers.

Swami Ramananda Tirtha led the second batch of satyagrahis. The movement continued in an intensified manner for about two months. Nearly four hundred persons from all over the state participated and went to prison.

In the history of Hyderabad state defiance of government orders was in itself a courageous act. The news of the largescale defiance of authority and law created a great deal of commotion and moved the people. This generated political consciousness among them. A number of satyagraha centres were organised in Telengana, Marathwada and Karnataka including Hyderabad, Madhira, Aurangabd. Baddam Yella Reddy and Arutla brothers and other prominent public workers who are now in the Communist Party led batches of satyagrahis and went to jail. Arutla Ramachandra Reddy played a prominent and crucial part in the organisation of the satyagraha movement.

The Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha entered the arena to win civil liberties in the state. Their objective was to achieve religious liberties. As a part of their strategy of struggle they tried to bring thousands of satyagrahis especially from Maharashtra

and Karnataka areas of Bombay but the police were arresting them on the borders of the state. It appears that they could not mobilise any satyagrahis in the Andhra districts. However much they tried to mobilise and organise, the political awareness and consciousness arising out of this was negligible when compared to such consciousness generated by the State Congress satyagraha.

The government issued orders banning the State Congress after the arrest of the first batch of satyagrahis and formulated rules for the punishment of satyagrahis. According to these rules satyagrahis could be imprisoned for a period of four years. In fact quite a number of them were sentenced to the maximum period.

We were released after completing the period of two and half months of imprisonment. As soon as we were released we received a call from Gandhiji to go over to Wardha. Someone had dinned into his ears that the State Congress satyagraha was also communal in character similar to that of Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha. He advised us to stop the satyagraha movement. In view of communal activity of communalists, he felt that our satyagraha would also get a communal colour and be misunderstood. Therefore he thought that the satyagraha movement should not continue. Quite a number of us did not agree with Gandhiji and we put our point of view before him. We argued that withdrawal of our satyagraha would only lead to the development of communal and wrong political outlook and trends among the people. We also told him that this was not the moment to surrender our political armour. However Gandhiji did not agree. Finally a statement was issued from Wardha suspending the satyagraha.

At a juncture when political movement in the state was taking shape, this suspension of satyagraha created a feeling of despair among young men like me.

During this period the Vande Mataram movement began. In the Osmania University, colleges and schools all students had to sing a prayer for eternal life of the nizam—Osman Ali Khan. Influenced by the rising tide of the political movements in the country, the students decided to sing Vande Mataram instead. Government banned this song and ordered that nobody should sing it anywhere. As a protest the students of Osmania University boycotted the university itself. Nagpur University in the then Cen-

tral Provinces invited these students and provided them with all facilities for their education.

Students influenced by the State Congress satyagraha got renewed enthusiasm by the Vande Mataram movement. Through these two movements a large number of cadres entered the political arena.

In spite of the ban on the State Congress its working committee meetings were being held. After some time the government released al the satyagrahis. It proposed to lift the ban if the name of the organisation was changed. Although the State Congress agreed to this proposal, the government did not lift the ban on some pretext or the other.

In this connection, it is useful to mention an event. The working committee meeting of the State Congress was being held. Without any prior intimation Sheikh Abdullah arrived suddenly from Bombay. We were totally unaware of his arrival till he came to the meeting of the working committee. Sheikh Abdullah was known then as Sher-e-Kashmir (Lion of Kashmir). He had a good reputation among the leaders of the states' people's movements. He had a prestigious place in the Indian national movement also. We questioned him about the situation in Kashmir. We heard the report given by him on the people's movement there. He expressed a keen desire to see and study some villages in Telengana to get a proper picture of the situation here. His enthusiasm was all right but the problem was who should accompany him? Burgula Ramakrishna Rao was also present in that meeting but eventually I and Baddam Yella Reddy prepared ourselves to go along with Sheikh Abdullah. His programme included visit to Bibinagar and Kolanpaka, the villages of Arutla brothers. His lunch was arranged at the residence of Arutla Lakshminarasimha Reddy. As soon as we reached Kolanpaka, we faced an interesting situation. It was a jagir village. Turab Yar Jung was its jagirdar. Peasants of Kolanpaka were fighting against the excessive taxes imposed by the jagirdar for quite some time. Muslims constituted twenty per cent of the population. Practically all the Muslims were supporters of the jagirdar in spite of some of them being peasants.

A delegation of Muslims visited Sheikh Abdullah and requested him to address a gathering in the local mosque. He sought our

opinion. We gave him an account of the local situation. We impressed upon him that the fight was not against Muslims but against the jagirdar. We had no objection to his addressing that meeting but we wanted him to convince the Muslim people to participate in the antijagirdar struggle. To save him from embarrassment none of us went along with him to the meeting. Sheikh Abdullah spoke and discussed for an hour in the mosque. Not only was he not able to convince the people there but he was questioned about his opposition to the jagirdar in spite of his being a Muslim. The slogan of 'Anal Malik' (I am the king !) had influenced them. So much so, Sheikh Abdullah returned from the meeting realising the futility of any further argument. He explained us that even the ordinary Muslims were mad with the thought of their being rulers and this madness could not be tackled by mere words and that they should be taught a lesson properly. This was the Sheikh of those days. But today he is so different !

Ban on the State Congress continued for a long time. It was only in 1946 that the ban was lifted. With the assumption of the presidentship of States' People's Conference by Jawaharlal Nehru the states' people's movements got greater importance in the country. Representation for Hyderabad in the conference became a problem. In the absence of State Congress, coordinating committee of Andhra Mahasabha, Maharashtra Parishad, Karnataka Mahasabha was formed. Along with them the rival AMS also got representation. The coordinating committee obtained representation in the States' People's Conference. Its members attended frequently the meetings of the standing committee and annual conferences.

In 1945 communists were expelled from the Congress and the States' People's Conference under the pressure of rightwing leaders like Sardar Patel. I went to Bombay to attend the executive meeting of States' People's Conference under the presidentship of Nehru. I discussed with Jainarayan Vyas, the then general secretary, about this expulsion. It was clear to me that the discussion was fruitless. They said that one could remain in it only if one resigned from the Communist Party. Some persons did resign. We did not do so.

4. EMERGENCE OF COMMUNIST PARTY

With the second world war there was growing interest in newspaper reading among the youth, and their thinking turned for the first time towards issues like fascism. Some young men like me who were influenced by the nationalist movement and political ideas had serious discussions on war and fascism even earlier. Among some socialist ideas were deep-rooted. These young men were running a discussion forum with the name 'Comrades Association' in Hyderabad. Comrades Makhdoom, Raj Bahadur Gour, Syed Ibrahim, Alam Khundmiri and others were its members. Surprisingly even Burgula Ramakrishna Rao encouraged and patronised it. By then Makhdoom had the reputation as a revolutionary poet.

Similarly there were some socialist-minded young men who participated in the Vande Mataram movement. Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao and Sarvadevabhatla Ramanatham were among them.

Baddam Yella Reddy, Arutla brothers and myself were among those working in the Andhra Mahasabha imbued with socialist ideas.

In the Maharashtra Parishad, Chandragupta Choudhary, Habibuddin and V. D. Deshpande were socialist-minded young men.

In 1939 all these four groups converged into the Nizam State Communist Committee. Andhra Communist Committee was one of the strongest units of the CPI and it was its help that led to the formation of the committee here. In fact the Andhra committee was its back-bone. The first political classes were held by Chandra Rajeswara Rao.

Local problems alone were not responsible for the emergence of the Communist Committee in the state. National and inter-

national situations were also causes. Some young men were deeply influenced by Nehru's books. Success of two five-year plans and emergence of a new society in the Soviet Union converted many in favour of socialist ideas. The ugly shadow of the world economic crisis in the capitalist world did not even touch the Soviet Union. Unemployment was eradicated. Economic conditions were improving day by day. This basic difference between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world created enthusiasm amongst us. We used to wish that such a society should be established here. With such youths who were attracted towards socialism, the Hyderabad Communist Committee came into existence.

Germany was defeated in the first world war. A glorious event that deserves to be written in letters of gold in world history took place in Russia. The foundations of a new social order were laid with the victory of the socialist revolution under the leadership of Lenin.

Germany after its defeat was in disgrace. Hitler, an ordinary soldier, with his demagogy and appeal to German national chauvinism could muster a good following. He roused feelings of racial hatred among them and propagated that the German Aryan race alone was capable of ruling the world. Therefore he appealed to the people to be ready to fight for the realisation of this right to rule the world which belonged only to Germany. He was able to rally all those who had a spirit of revenge as a result of Germany's defeat. Recognising that the Soviet Union was the only force which could challenge his plans of world domination, he infused anticommunist and anti-Soviet feelings among his followers. In his autobiography *Mein Kampf* he elaborately dealt with all this. Every page of this book emits anticommunism. He concentrated his attack on communism.

During the days of Hitler's rise there was a democratic government in Germany. In this democratic setup progressive forces were also strong. A strong Communist Party also existed. Hitler's National Socialist Party was in minority. Yet it was a very well-disciplined party. There was no unity among the progressive forces although they were in a majority. Utilising this Hitler overthrew the democratic government, captured power and became a dictator.

Similarly Mussolini had already become the dictator of Italy. Thus fascism became a force to be reckoned with in Europe. Japanese imperialism was forging ahead with the intention of swallowing the whole of Asia. Manchuria, a Chinese territory, was already conquered by Japan. Abyssinia was taken over by Mussolini. These three powers began to work in coordination for dividing the entire world among themselves.

It is necessary to explain what fascism is and why and how it comes into existence. Continuous growth of capitalism results in monopoly capitalism. The bourgeoisie petronises democracy as long as it serves its selfish interests as a watch-dog. It appears outwardly to be very liberal. It always talks of people and their welfare. With the introduction of adult franchise, progressives also have the opportunity to get elected against the will of the capitalists. Those elected in this manner question the interest of monopoly capitalists. At a time when they are convinced that democracy can no more protect their interests they come out in a monstrous form discarding their liberal facade. They destroy the democratic setup and shoot and kill the watch-dogs, adopt fascism and crush the right to question. They destroy democracy in all its manifestations and establish an autocratic and dictatorial machinery.

The events in Spain are a live example of this. All the leftist forces joined in a united front in the general elections held in 1936. The Communist Party under the leadership of the heroic woman La Pasionaria was also a part of the united front. As against this united front all the reactionary forces together formed another front in which capitalists, landlords, religious leaders and other reactionaries participated. In the contest in the elections the united leftists came out victorious and took over the reins of power. The united front government was able to implement socialist programmes to a certain extent. This created a scare and panic among the reactionary forces of Spain and Europe. All the counterrevolutionary forces united under the leadership of General Franco and declared war on the progressive government. After three years of civil war the counterrevolutionary forces succeeded in 1939. Power passed into the hands of General Franco. He was helped in every way by nazi Germany and fascist Italy during this war. The Soviet Union which was just

then developing economically could only lend its moral support but no economic and military aid could be given to the progressive forces. Britain and France claiming to be democratic all the time helped General Franco indirectly by adopting a position of neutrality. Communist parties of the world organised and sent an International Brigade to help the united front government. The valiant battles fought by this brigade are depicted as stories of valour and courage in world literature even today. Many persons from ordinary workers to intellectuals joined the brigade and sacrificed their lives.

Jawaharlal Nehru went to Spain during the civil war. He congratulated the left and progressive forces for their fight against the counterrevolutionaries and greeted the International Brigade. After his return to India he explained to the people the real face of fascism. He prevailed upon the Congress to pass resolutions against fascism.

I have already told of the tremendous power of Hitler which he realised by provoking and rousing the chauvinist sentiments of the German people. He built a strong military machine. It has also been mentioned that he poured the venom of anticommunism and created anticommunist feeling among the German people. The imperialist countries, Britain, France and the USA, gave economic and military aid to Germany in the hope that Hitler would some day attack the Soviet Union. They hoped that Germany by declaring war on communism would destroy it completely. In the event of this not being fulfilled they still hoped that their empires would be intact while Hitler Germany and Soviet Union would fight and bleed in a war and become weak. That is why they conceded the many humiliating that Hitler made. The most disgraceful was the handing over of Czechoslovakia to Hitler through the Munich Pact.

Soviet Union very well realised the danger of fascism. It entered into negotiations with Britain and France to find a common basis to fight fascism unitedly. Since their intentions were different Britain and France did not join in any common course of action with the Soviet Union. The negotiations failed.

Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. The hopes of the imperialist powers that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union were belied by

certain developments which took place earlier. And they were forced to declare war against Germany. Thus the second world war began and within a short period Hitler and Mussolini conquered practically the whole of Europe.

With these events the people of Britain and France understood the true nature of fascism. Chamberlain who was collaborating with Hitler had to resign and Churchill came to power. A national government under Churchill's premiership, including the Labour Party, was established.

War began in 1939 and immediately all the communist parties in the world including the Communist Party of India declared it an imperialist war. Since the declaration of war by Britain and France was meant to preserve their empires and for extension of German imperialism, it would be correct to characterise it as an imperialist war. It had not yet assumed an antifascist character. Moreover the people of Britain and France could not realise fully the dangers of fascism and did not put pressure on their governments to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union for a joint fight against Hitler. As such there is nothing wrong in calling it an imperialist war.

Hitler mobilised all the economic and military resources of the occupied countries in Europe. Arms and ammunition needed for this war were manufactured. With a huge military force at his command he invaded the Soviet Union. He did not want Britain and France to join hands with the Soviet Union. To this end he sent Herr Hesse as an emissary to England to talk to them to keep them away from the Soviet Union. By then a powerful public opinion in England developed in favour of a pact for united action with the Soviet Union. So that Churchill had to put Hitler's emissary in jail and reject Hitler's proposals. Hitler declared war on the Soviet Union on 21 June 1941. These events brought about a change in the nature of the war. Anger and hatred against fascism were rising among people all over the world. The colonial system almost collapsed after the war and socialist family of nations expanded. The seeds of the future developments were visible even during the war itself. Therefore there is nothing wrong in characterising the war as a people's war.

It was in this international situation that the Communist

Party began to work openly in Telengana. The war had a great impact on the people. The retreat of the Soviet forces in the initial phases of the war was extremely painful to young men like me. Hitler's forces reached the outskirts of Moscow and in the battles there the Soviet Union achieved its first victory. After the victory at Stalingrad the Red Army began to chase and drive the nazi forces back. In spite of growing demand from the British people and people all over the world the imperialists refused to open a second front. But seeing the continued successes of the Red Army and when the defeat of the nazis was imminent and anticipating that the Soviet Union was in a position to occupy entire Europe, they decided to open the second front. With this the war reached its final phase. The Red Flag was flown on the Reichstag (German Parliament building) on 9 May 1945. This victory enthused us immensely. Subsequently all the developments were very encouraging. Many among the youth who were discussing the events of the war with interest were amazed at the successes of the Soviet Union. Many a young man was transformed into a communist by these events. They were thrilled by the epic resistance of the Red Army. Apart from colossal economic loss, two crores of people shed their blood and died in the Soviet Union. There was general acclaim of the Soviet Union for having saved humanity from the fascist demon. With these antifascist feelings we could not agree with the 'Quit India' resolution of the Congress of 1942 and subsequent events.

Congressmen saw only the danger of British imperialism but did not recognise the peril of fascism which had become dangerous to the world as a whole. If it had correctly understood these twin dangers the Congress could have played a better role. The Communist Party too committed certain mistakes in implementing the people's war policy. It recognised the danger of fascism but underestimated the imperialist danger. Therefore it made the mistake of characterising many patriots as fifth columnists. Patient explanation and persuasion were needed to impress upon them the danger of fascism and the character of people's war.

In spite of these mistakes the Communist Party here grew substantially during the war period. Hitherto we had worked underground and suffered many restrictions in prisons. Although

we committed some mistakes, our correct antifascist stand and organisation of people's struggles during the period of war, the sacrifices and determination of our workers were all instrumental in strengthening and developing the party.

One of the many problems that faced the people in Telengana was levy on foodgrains. Government decided that the peasant should give as levy a certain quantity of foodgrains per acre irrespective of whether there was any produce at all or not. In fixing the levy and in measuring the grains given by the peasant a lot of injustice was done by local officials and landlords. At every stage the landlords harassed the peasants and collected more whereas they sent in lesser levy themselves. Peasants had to take the levy grain to the market in their carts where again injustice was done in weighing and fixing of prices. There used to be many such irregularities.

Workers of the Andhra Mahasabha toured the villages and mobilised the peasants to fight against unjust practices in the levy system. They accompanied the peasants and ensured correct measurements of foodgrains and secured proper price. They also prevented the merchants from cheating.

Government's attention was drawn to the suggestions made by me in my presidential address to the Bhongir Andhra Mahasabha.

Andhra Mahasabha workers undertook this work not only in the villages but also in the towns. They used to stand at ration shops in towns and see that people received their due ration properly. They also prevented hoarding and sale of daily necessities of life like kerosene and cloth at a higher price in the blackmarket by merchants. There are many instances of catching them and handing the hoarders over to the government while indulging in blackmarket.

Workers of Andhra Mahasabha did not allow officials to collect money beyond the capacity of peasants towards the war fund. Quotas were fixed according to the conditions of the villagers and they were rigorously implemented through the efforts of our workers. They worked day and night for collection of donations to the Bengal famine relief fund. Collections were made through many cultural programmes. Nazar's burrakatha (an opera) on

Bengal famine moved the people and brought tears to their eyes. Cultural squads were formed in many villages.

During this period the struggle of the people against the opressive measures of the raja of Munagala created enthusiasm among the people of border talukas of Nalgonda district. We, the members of the Communist Party, campaigned in every village against British imperialism and fascism. Hundreds of such meetings were held.

The government launched cases against workers characterising every activity as antiwar. Fighting these cases was in itself a big activity in those days. Struggles against excessive taxes by jagirdars and forced labour were the order of the day. Hundreds of village committees of Andhra Mahasabha were formed and there was a big increase in Communist Party membership and organisers. Many comrades worked as wholetime workers of the party while they themselves bore the expenses. Some of them enthusiastically sold their entire properties and donated to the party. The biggest asset of the party was their sacrifice and will to work and unflinching faith and confidence in communism.

5. PEOPLE'S UPSURGE

The Bhongir conference concluded in an atmosphere of immense enthusiasm. 'Sangham' appeared as a beaconlight of hope to peasants who had come from nearby villages. Thousands of people enrolled themselves as members. They felt that with membership chit of the sangham they do not have to fear government officials and need not do forced labour for landlords.

Jangaon taluka is adjacent to Bhongir and a large number of people from there attended the conference. Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy was a big landlord in Jangaon taluka, owning nearly ten thousand acres of land. In the neighbourhood there were a number of small landlords for whom his rule was an ideal. It was unimaginable for anyone to go against the Visnuru landlord. His was an expert hand in manoeuvring officials and policemen to his side. He was a seasoned 'pairavikar' (expert in litigation) in the city and therefore it was out of question to win a case against him.

There was no limit to the cruel acts committed by him and his mother—the landlord of Kadavendi village. I used to hear many stories about his atrocities right from my childhood. Among many such stories the one relating to Bandagi is significant.

Bandagi, a Muslim peasant, had a quarrel with his brothers about some land. His elder brother Abbas Ali turned into a puppet of the landlord and sought to grab his younger brothers' land. Bandagi was a smart young man with a temperament of moving intimately among the people. He did not like his brother joining hands with Ramachandra Reddy. Having learnt that their elder brother was creating trouble with the encouragement of Ramachandra Reddy all the brothers demanded the partition of land. Bandagi was their leader. He was just twenty years old

then. Abbas Ali went to the court with the support of the landlord. The case dragged on for nearly three years. Ultimately the court decreed in favour of Bandagi. Although it was Abbas Ali who lost the case the real defeat was of Ramachandra Reddy and his officials and of their ego. Ramachandra Reddy considered it a loss of personal prestige. He wanted to take revenge on Bandagi somehow. He got Bandagi murdered with the help of Abbas Ali and others on the roadside when he got down from a bus. Bandagi was a friend of the people and with his murder the people's anger and hatred towards Ramachandra Reddy increased enormously. The people have built a tomb at the very place where his blood was spilled and continue to pay their homage to their valiant son every year. Ramachandra Reddy got many such murders done.

This lord of Visnuru collected thousands of rupees for construction of his building and purchase of his car. The tribulations of forced labour which the people had to undergo are indescribable. Peasants had to till their lands only after doing free labour on the lands of the landlord. His divankhana was the court. Everyone should pay him bribes. Many such injustices were committed. These stories have been elaborately dealt with in Devulapalli Venkateswar Rao's telugu book *Heroic Struggles of Jangaon People*. They can be found in other writings also. After the Bhongir conference, people of Jangaon taluka became more conscious and took to direct action. They started direct action and became ready for resistance. Arutla Ramachandra Reddy took up the leadership and bravely carried on the movement. Units of Andhra Mahasabha were established in villages and the entire people began enlisting themselves as members.

Membership by payment of one anna was deemed by the people as a passport to their emancipation from these atrocities. Within a short time eight thousand members were enrolled in these few villages. This was in fact a revolt against authoritarian landlordism.

Arutla Ramachandra Reddy and Subba Rao went to address a meeting in Palakurti village organised by the Andhra Mahasabha. Thousands of people gathered at the meeting. Goondas sent by Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy also came to this meeting. People,

when they learnt that these goondas had come with the intention of murdering the leaders, caught hold of them and beat them. Visnuru landlord was enraged by this incident. He managed to get Ramachandra Reddy, Subba Rao and eight others arrested, charging them with attempt to murder. It appeared that these arrests had created a little lull in the enthusiasm of the people. Andhra Mahasabha gave a call to resist these arrests by carrying on the fight in the courts. This created enthusiasm among the people. This case was conducted in the sessions court of Medak. The sessions judge was already prejudiced against the accused and had formed his opinion in advance. He expressed his views in favour of the landlord in the open court. We appealed to the high court for a transfer of the case to another sessions court. Our appeal was granted by the high court. The case was transferred to Pingle Venkat Rama Reddy who was working as honorary sessions judge in the same premises. We tried to impress upon him the real facts of the case. Visnuru landlord moved heaven and earth as this case was crucial because it could put a stop to his game.

As president of the Andhra Mahasabha I toured a number of villages of the area at that time. Thousands of people gave me tumultuous welcome. I was the president of the eleventh session and people took me in carts drawn by eleven pairs of bullocks from village to village. The love and affection of the people for the Andhra Mahasabha enthused me very much.

Konda Lakshman Bapuji was our lawyer in the Palakurti case and he worked brilliantly. Arutla Ramachandra Reddy, Subba Rao and others were released after spending thirteen months in prison. We had won the case. Visnuru landlord's hopes were shattered. People looked upon this case with great anxiety and interest. They considered that the future of their struggle depended upon the success of this case. This case brought into prominence the young lawyer Konda Lakshman Bapuji and helped him in building up his future. Success in the case further emboldened the people and increased their will and vigour to fight.

At this time we had to face problems of land in some villages. Three types of problems were there. Firstly, distribution of banjar lands to the tiller. Secondly, to save tenants from eviction by landlords from the lands cultivated by them for generations.

Thirdly, problems relating to unjust acquisition of land from the tiller on the plea of recovery of debts and other reasons. These were the main problems of land that faced us.

One such problem confronted us in the village of Mundrai. Katar Ramachandra Rao and his brothers owned forty-five acres of land. Many lambadi families were cultivating these lands for generations together. These landlords went with a gang of goondas to evict the lambadi tenants. All the lambadi people unitedly resisted this attack. Reserve police came in support of the landlords. On one side were the police and goondas with guns and swords, and on the other were lambadis and thousands of people from neighbouring villages who had come in their support with red flags and slings and stones. They faced each other as in a battle-field. The police threatened to shoot but the people remained undaunted. The police and the goondas had to beat a retreat. These lands are still under the possession of these lambadis.

A similar struggle took place in Palakurti village. Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy tried to occupy the land of a washerwoman Ayilamma. The crop was ready for harvest. The landlord sent goondas to take the harvest to him. People taught a lesson to the goondas and handed over the harvested crop to Ayilamma. Police arrived next morning in strength. They arrested K. Ramachandra Reddy and others on the charge that they tried to protect the tenancy land of Ayilamma. The arrested comrades were taken to Visnuru police station and were subjected to inhuman torture. Five days after this incident A. Lakshminarsimha Reddy who was sent by the Andhra Mahasabha for investigations was waylaid by goondas and severely beaten and tortured.

The government launched hundreds of cases during this period on the plea that we were instigating the people and creating anarchy in the villages. We had to fight in the courts for the release of our comrades. About a thousand were involved in such cases.

The above incidents made it clear to us that there was no security for the people and leaders from the goondas of landlords. Therefore we sent directives to our units through the Andhra Mahasabha to organise volunteer squads and arm them with lathis.

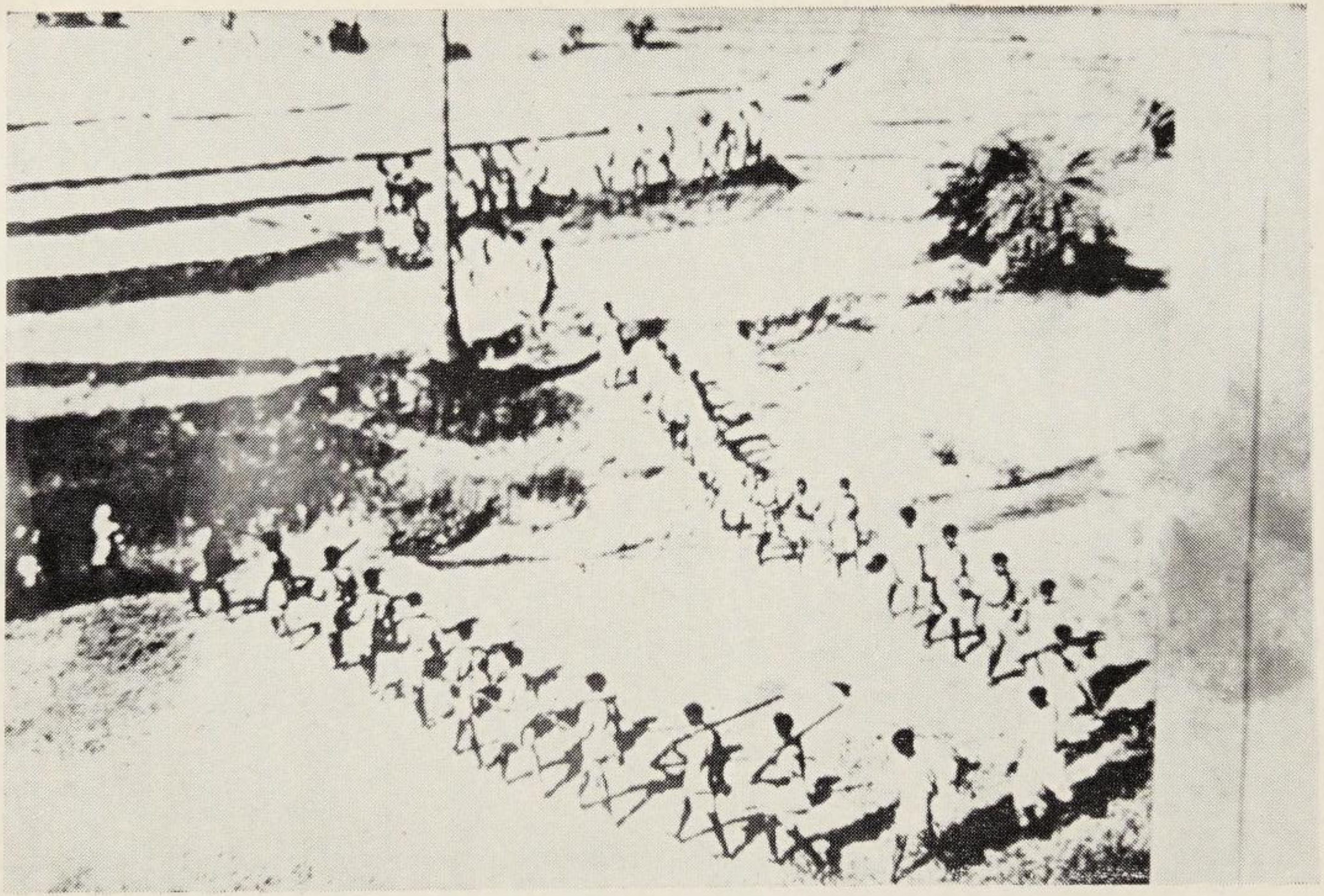
It is not the people who took to lathis first but the goondas of the landlords. As a defensive measure the people had inevitably to take to lathis. With this serious land problems faced the Andhra Mahasabha and the party. Hitherto the struggles were only against forced labour, illegal collections and atrocities of the landlords. All these happened within the limitations of whatever law existed under the nizam at that time. But land problems defied any answer under the then existing laws. As such we had to defy the law and fight for land. With our taking up these land problems the struggles reached a new stage.

The fight of the Jangaon people thus created tremendous enthusiasm. People were getting ready to fight the landlords and their atrocities with lathis in their hands. In this context the struggle of the people of Kadavendi village against Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy is of historical importance. Goondas of the landlord gathered in the village to murder Sangham leaders. To this end they had already conspired with the police. On 4 July 1946 goondas threw stones at the houses of workers and provoked them. Kadavendi people understood the tactics of Visnuru deshmukh. Hundreds of people gathered in front of the Andhra Mahasabha office. A procession with red flags was taken out. As soon as it reached the well-fortified building of the deshmukh shots were fired from inside. Doddi Malliah and Mangali Komariah were hit by bullets and fell down. Bullets pierced the stomach of Doddi Komariah, a young Sangham leader, who was leading the procession and he fell down. The anger and indignation of people knew no bounds at this sight. They surrounded the building in such a manner that no one could come out or enter it. This news spread like wildfire to the surrounding villages. People from other villages came like a torrent into Kadavendi in support of the local people. Deshmukh Ramachandra Reddy sent two hundred goondas with swords and daggers in defence of his building. The angry people beat back and drove away the goondas. Sixty armed reserve police stepped into the village and seeing the mass of humanity realised the futility of their arms. They thought that there could be no safety either for themselves or the landlord, and tried to deceive the people into leaving that place. They realised that it was of no use provoking the already enraged people. They

Early morning parade.

Telengana women at rifle training.

Vigilant even in the dining hall.



Sangham volunteers on the march.

assured the people that the culprits would be punished by the landlord.

After postmortem thousands of people took the body of the martyr Komariah in a mighty procession and performed the funeral with due respect. It was quite common for landlords to beat, torture and kill people for creating terror in order to foist their exploitation and get away with their misdeeds. After every holocaust people used to remain humbled and calm. The situation changed after the struggles organised by the Andhra Mahasabha. The murder committed by the landlords' goondas and the terror that was unleashed further strengthened their fighting mood, faith in their ideals and enthusiasm. Their courage was enhanced further. This was a fact in those days. It was the landlord who got demoralised with the ever-increasing avalanche of people's resistance to terror. This was very clear from every struggle that took place subsequently. From every battle people marched ahead with firm determination.

People of Kadavendi declared and practised social boycott of the landlord, and as a result his lands were not cultivated and his agriculture came to a standstill.

Doddi Komariah's murder led to a new upsurge among the people of Telengana and in every struggle Komariah appeared as the immortal hero. Poets raised their voices and composed songs. They observed Komariah Day and pledged themselves to continuously fight the landlord. Komariah's heroic death created a new history.

People's upsurge spread to the talukas of Bhongir, Suryapet, Ramannapet, Nalgonda and Huzurnagar talukas of Nalgonda district. In October 1946 the well-known battle of Balemula took place.

Balemula is a village in Suryapet taluka. The reserve police attacked the village to suppress the people's movement. Anantayya and Mattayya, leaders of the local Sangham, fought the police relentlessly with sticks. Ultimately both these comrades died as heroes as a result of revolver shots fired by the circle inspector.

In November 1946 Patha Suryapet was the scene of a battle. After each battle there was a new awakening among the people. The police realised that they lacked the strength to face the people and therefore they brought in the army to aid them. People

of Patha Suryapet resisted with sticks, slings and stones at their disposal. Leader of the people Narasani Narayana fell a victim to the firing by the soldiers.

During this period the people of Akhnoor and Machireddipalli villages fought the oppressive regime of the nizam. People taught a lesson to those officials who committed atrocities on them. The police retaliated by attacking the villages on a big scale, beat and tortured many, raped women, looted many houses and arrested a large number of persons. These incidents assumed all-India significance.

I went to the party headquarters in Bombay and described the atrocities committed by the police in Akhnoor and Machireddipalli and other villages. Mohan Kumaramangalam working in the party central office immediately convened a press conference. All the Bombay papers prominently published my interview.

These matters came to the notice of Gandhiji who in a letter to Padmaja Naidu directed her to visit the villages of Akhnoor and Machireddipalli and submit a report to him. Padmaja visited these villages and reported to Gandhiji that news appearing in the Bombay papers was correct and true.

We learnt that Gandhiji corresponded with the nizam to which the latter turned a deaf ear.

At this stage the upsurge of the people rose to new heights. At the call of the Andhra Mahasabha thousands of volunteers were recruited. Each one of them possessed a stick and a sling and stones. Women also joined in thousands, which was a new factor in this phase. Villagers in their thousands with red flags in their hands used to go to the neighbouring villages and establish the Sangham. All this was like a triumphant march with revolutionary slogans ringing gloriously. These volunteer squads were popularly called 'Gudpala Sangham'. Enemies of the people got demoralised as soon as they heard the slogan 'jai' under the impression that the Gudpala Sangham had arrived.

The role of women in the struggles was noteworthy. They supplied stones for the slings used by the men, and were ever ready to throw chilli powder in the eyes of the enemies. Lakhs of women and men were drawn into the fold of the struggle.

Devaruppala, a small village in Jangaon taluka, whose people revolted against local oppression and the government was attack-

ed by the police and officials with military aid. In order to resist them not only the people of Devaruppala but thousands from neighbouring villages collected and hit back with slings and bitterly resisted the police. This battle continued for many hours. The army opened fire on the people with .303 rifles and two comrades died.

In a similar manner clashes took place between the people and contingents of police and army where some people also died.

The people of Puligilla village in Ramannapet taluka were fighting against excessive taxes and irregular collections by the jagirdar. The jagirdar declared war on the people by calling in the army and police. People resisted and fought back.

Villagers of Dharmapuram in Jangaon taluka fought against the landlord Pusukuri Raghava Rao for the defence of the tenancy lands being cultivated by the lambadis for generations.

The prolonged struggle of the people of Betavole in Huzurnagar taluka against Makhtadar Seetaramachandra Rao assumed serious proportions. No land settlement was done in this village. People refused to pay taxes unless land settlement was made. The makhtadar was in occupation of six hundred acres of land for a long time. These six hundred acres were occupied by the people and distributed among themselves, and they are in possession of these lands even now.

In this very period the struggle of the people of Mallareddiguda in Huzurnagar taluka assumed prominence. People resisted the nizam's army and police in November 1946. Women played a crucial part in this struggle. Three women were killed in this battle.

A new enthusiasm was born among the people through these struggles. They began to recognise certain truths. They understood well that their problems could not be solved unless they fought not only the local goondas but also the police. Their will to fight was greatly strengthened. Forced labour and irregular collections came to an end. Village officers and other officials feared to step into the villages without police protection. All issues that arose in the villages were resolved by local committees formed by the people.

In this period poets were born among the ranks of the people. Cultural programmes through Burrakatha, Golla Suddulu (Shepherd's tales) and songs were admired by the people. Cultural squads were formed everywhere and they presented programmes to hundreds and thousands of people. Poets who were thrown up by the struggle instilled in the people a spirit of enthusiasm and readiness for battle.

Meezan, a daily newspaper, was brought out from Hyderabad by Ghulam Mohammed Calcuttawala, a businessman, in Telugu, Urdu and English. Adavi Bapiraju was the editor of the Telugu edition. The Telugu *Meezan* fully reflected the movement of the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party irrespective of the intentions with which the paper was being published. Literature born out of our struggle also found a place in it.

It was October 1946. While we were busy with our work information reached us that our houses would be raided by the police one night to arrest us. As soon as we learnt of the news we discussed and took the decision that we would work in the office during the day as usual but move into secret places at night. We did accordingly. As anticipated our homes were raided that night but none of us except Alwarswami and another comrade could be arrested. Subsequently we went to Vijayawada after being underground in Hyderabad for some time. From that moment the offices of the Communist Party and Andhra Mahasabha functioned from Vijayawada.

People's struggle in Telengana was growing. Apprehensive of its further intensification the nizam's government established army camps in the villages and banned the Communist Party in November 1946.

With the ban on the party all our activities had to be directed from Vijayawada. Atrocities of the army on the people knew no bounds—they were harassed so that they could get communist leaders arrested. Yet the people never stopped physically beating the goondas. Therefore the army intensified its raids on villages in support of landlords. Peaceful conditions appeared to prevail for some time as a result of their repressive measures but the flame of people's anger continued to burn and they waited and looked for revenge.

People protected the Sangham leaders without any fear and arranged food for them. There came a lull in the people's movement for some time. In spite of repression workers moved about secretly in villages and kept an eye on the activities of landlords and other enemies. They distributed leaflets and when an occasion arose gave a beating to the landlords.

The leadership gave serious thought to the manner and method through which soldiers equipped with guns could be resisted. We arrived at the decision that armed resistance was the inescapable alternative. We began to collect some arms during these days, and some months passed in this manner.

Seeing the lull in the movement and feeling that it had cooled down, the nizam lifted the army camps from the villages. Underground activities continued and village defence squads were being organised.

6. FIFTEENTH AUGUST 1947

After ruling over India for two hundred years the British imperialists left the country handing over power to Congress leaders. While leaving, they implemented the Mountbatten plan which permitted princely states to remain independent. The nizam refused to merge the Hyderabad state into the Indian union and entertained dreams of his remaining independent. Glorious celebrations of independence were held by people in India. Similarly celebrations took place in Hyderabad state in which the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party participated.

Congress leaders after assuming power put pressure on the states to merge with the Indian union. However the nizam was opposed to merger right from the beginning and dreamt of an independent Hyderabad for a long time. He tried to achieve independence in accordance with and by utilising the Mountbatten award. This was totally opposed to the aspirations of the people of the state who demanded that Hyderabad should merge with India and remain an integral part of the country. Much earlier the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party had demanded the merger of Hyderabad with India and also one single state for all the Telugu people to live together. With this objecive in view they raised the slogan of Vishalaandhra. Taking note of the ill intentions of the nizam to remain independent the people prepared themselves to fight him. The State Congress launched a satyagraha movement. At this the razakars jumped into the open.

The Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and the razakars stood by the nizam in his dreams of independence. They were instigated into actions for suppression of people's movements. Even the satyagraha

movement of the Congress appeared to be an act of betrayal to the Majlis and razakars. They unleashed violence on satyagrahis. Faced with this the nonviolent satyagraha of the Congress proved a failure. People including the youth in the Congress realised that there was no other way except armed struggle. This resulted in a resistance movement of all the people. Students quit colleges, lawyers boycotted courts and village people refused to cooperate with the government. They burnt the records of village officials—patels and patwaris—refused to pay taxes and put a stop to all excise transactions by not tapping toddy from the trees. Nizam's flag was removed and in its place the national flag was hoisted in village after village.

The account-books of sahukars were burnt. The government levied duties on all articles brought from outside the state. To collect them there were customs checkposts in all border areas of the state. These checkposts were also burnt down by the people. They acquired large quantities of foodgrains stocked by merchants and landlords and distributed them among the people. Programme of land-distribution also commenced at that time. In these activities workers of the Communist Party and Andhra Mahasabha participated along with congressmen and played a significant and decisive part. Nizam's rule came to a standstill in the state. The lull that had crept into the movement for about four to five months from January 1947 was broken. The cooperation and united activity of all sections of the people including congressmen led to an intense growth of people's upsurge than ever before.

The nizam was shocked and jittery at all this as he was under the illusion that the upsurge had cooled down. Some landlords cooperated with the people which frightened the nizam as he had suppressed people's movements with their help in the past. He unleashed the police and razakars on the people and thereby hoped to create religious animosity among them. He did not seem to find any other way. The only objective of razakars was religious hatred and they were aided actively by the nizam with money and arms. Their leader then was Kasim Razvi. Making full use of the government administrative machinery and through armed raids on villages they sought to suppress the rising tide of people's

struggle. Largescale arrests were made with the help of police and army.

There was a qualitative difference in the tactics to be adopted in face of the attacks by police and razakars and those that were in vogue in the past. Both the leadership and the people recognised this. The arrival of police and razakars was announced by beat of drums. People of some villages retaliated against razakars, and wherever they saw them with superior arms the villagers escaped from the village. These are some of the characteristics of guerilla warfare. Some villages were burnt down by razakars during this period.

We arrived at the conclusion that tactics adopted till then were inadequate in view of the changed character of the struggle. Lathis, slings and stones used in the past could not withstand the arms of the soldiers; they were not sufficient even for selfdefence. It was decided that the struggle should be raised to a higher level without which it was impossible to resist the government forces. After serious discussion on the new situation we took some decisions. It was felt that we could not resist the raids of army, police and razakars without well-trained guerillas. The first prerequisites were collection of arms and formation of guerilla squads. All the previous struggles were of an economic nature and in selfdefence. Although they were politically significant they were not products of the slogan of political liberation. Consequently future struggles had to be planned with the slogan of political liberation unlike in the past. The Communist Party and Andhra Mahasabha jointly gave a call for collection of arms and formation of guerilla squads.

A directive was issued for sudden raids in the night on homes of landlords and seizure of their weapons on a fixed date. This was fully implemented, and helped in the collection of arms. Guerilla squads were formed with young men who could devote all their time. This was the first type of squad. A second sort of squad for village defence was organised with such men who could not devote all their time to guerilla squads. The third category of squads was composed of those who destroyed the communication and transport lines of the army and razakars. Thus three different types of guerilla squads were established. As soon as their organisation was completed we gave a call for guerilla warfare.

With the arms secured by these squads initially one squad for every district was formed and as the number of arms increased taluka and firka squads were also organised. From the initial ten to twenty members, the squad grew into a company of a hundred. Some comrades who had formerly worked in the army imparted training in tactics of warfare. After some time there emerged instructors among our workers. This was a consequence of continued battles and expansion of squads.

I have already stated that the Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha were functioning from Vijayawada. We learnt that the government of composite Madras was about to ban the Communist Party at a time when we were preparing for armed struggle. I went to Madras to impress upon the government the need to avoid such injustice to us when we were fighting the nizam's government. Explaining the aims and nature of our struggle I called upon the government not to ban the party in Madras state. They then agreed to this but banned the party later on out of fear of our intensified armed struggle.

Andhra people in general and oppressed people in particular stood by the Telengana armed struggle with great affection and sympathy. They donated thousands of rupees. Basava Punniah, myself and other comrades went round Vijayawada for two days and collected twenty thousand rupees for purchase of arms. Cultural activities were at their peak in the Andhra region. Squads of Krishna District Praja Natya Mandali (People's Theatre) and Provincial Natya Mandali were noteworthy. The immortal play *Ma Bhoomi* (Our Land) written by Sunkara Satyanarayana and Vasireddi Bhaskara Rao were staged by the above troupes. These performances were held in the border villages and were attended by people on both sides of the border. I used to attend them and addressed the people during the intermission describing the Telengana struggle and appealed for donations. Thousands were collected on the spot. Women donated necklaces, bangles and rings. Watches and pens were also given which fetched money when auctioned then and there.

Meanwhile the armed struggle reached new heights. After the ban on the Communist Party in Madras we had to go underground. Ordinarily we were in villages of Krishna district. People

protected us like the apple of their eye. We saw all-round sympathy for our armed struggle. Many party workers from the Andhra region participated in the armed struggle and even laid down their lives. This shows the sort of feelings which the people of that region had towards our armed struggle.

Among those who directly participated in this struggle is the present state secretary of the party Tammareddi Satyanarayana. He was a regional commander of guerilla squads. Many comrades who took part in the struggle laid the foundation of Vishalaandhra through their sacrifice. Telengana struggle left a deep impact on the Telugu literature of that period. Many poems, novels, stories and plays were published depicting and reflecting the struggle.

However the Congress leaders came out with stories of strange experiences in Andhra area. Large number of congressmen and landlords from Telengana went over to Andhra area for protection. They narrated experiences of a variety of difficulties created for them including high rents for houses and sale of articles at blackmarket prices. Perhaps they were partly true. But it is not correct to blame the people of Andhra for what was done by a few unscrupulous greedy men and capitalists.

Living in the border areas of Khammam and Madhira I was in touch with the struggles in the district, the reason for this being the presence of the entire committee in Vijayawada. Hitherto, people's struggles were not as intense and vigorous in Warangal district as in Nalgonda. Guerilla activity picked up in the district after September 1947. I shall describe here how guerilla struggles began there.

Paritala, a jagir village of nizam, was like an island in the midst of Krishna district. There was a police station with a subinspector and ten to fifteen policemen armed with rifles. We functioned a guerilla training school in a nearby village where thirty comrades were trained. They already possessed some modern weapons. We decided to attack the Paritala police station and capture their arms. The leader of this squad was Veeramachineni Prasad Rao, popularly known as Bombay Prasad. They met with no resistance from the police and easily captured twenty weapons. But

they were not modern weapons. The squad went round Madhira talkua with the weapons and prepared the people for action.

We learnt that three policemen guarding the railway gateman's house at the border in Madhira taluka had rifles. We decided to capture these rifles and ten guerillas under the leadership of Manchikanti Ramakrishna Rao attacked in the night. They threw a handgrenade into the policemen's room. No one was killed but one policeman was injured. All three rifles were captured and the members of the squad returned safely.

A road was being laid at the border near Bonakal station by workers under police protection. We got the news that policemen in one lorry and workers in another went for work daily in the morning. We planned to attack the policemen and snatch the weapons. Bombay Prasad was again the leader of this squad. Our squad was in readiness behind rocks on both sides of the road. Lorries arrived but as against our expectation both lorries comprised of workers as well as policemen.

Meanwhile policemen from the first lorry commenced firing and our comrades returned fire. The second lorry stopped behind and the coolies trembled and made noises. The first lorry went further away from our squad, dropped the workers and on its return was attacked by a handgrenade by a member of our squad. They continued to fire and ran away towards Bonakal. Four policemen died as a result of our grenade attack and a member of our squad was injured. The raid was successful but without the expected results. This we realised was due to day-light attack on the police.

Meenavolu is one of the border villages in Madhira taluka. Some policemen led by two white sergeants visited the village for taking away chickens. One of them had a rifle and the other a revolver. People turned on them and chased them. The policemen who probably unarmed were running ahead of the sergeants. The two armed sergeants who were hotly chased fired as they ran resulting in the death of four persons. Yet the people did not give up till they were captured. The sergeants lost their lives and their rifle and revolver were taken by the people. People sent the rifle to a Congress camp in a nearby village and the revolver to me, then living in a neighbouring village. Although four of their comrades had fallen they chased and wiped out the enemy with

indomitable courage. This boldness of the people is praiseworthy. I mentioned and commended these heroic acts in a public meeting in the village held during the first general elections. People applauded with great joy and ringing sounds of jai jai. Approximately ninety-five per cent of votes were polled by our candidate in the elections.

In this manner collection of arms and guerilla battles continued to take place in four thousand villages of the districts of Nalgonda, Medak, Warangal and Karimnagar. Nearly four thousand guerilla fighters, fifteen to twenty thousand village defence volunteers and a large number of members of sabotage squads participated in this liberation struggle. They were sons of ordinary peasants, who snatched weapons from the enemy, comprehended guerilla methods and through their own experience learnt military expertise. Illiterate young men became squad commanders. Hundreds of such struggles spread all over Telengana.

Lakhs of people participated in this fight in one form or the other. Thousands could be mobilised at any time and any moment whenever the call was given. One significant aspect came out clearly from all the guerilla battles. And this was the total absence of any fall or weakening of the morale of guerillas due to the death of any member at the hands of the army and police. Moreover their anger and vengeance knew no bounds. At one time the local commanders issued directives to the sabotage squads to render the Suryapet-Jangaon road useless to the army. Response and mobilisation were such that thousands of people with hoes and crowbars destroyed culverts and the road itself in a short time. This is a proof of the confidence and determination displayed by the people in response to our call. Gradually there was a constant increase in the number of squads and their members as also weapons and number of clashes. Methods of arms collection were varied and curious. Instances of the enemy supplying us with weapons on payment are also known. We had to buy a .303 rifle at a cost of six thousand rupees. Guider, a submachine gun, worked very much like a stengun but its bullets reached a distance of six hundred yards. Razakars trembled at the sight of this weapon. Normally these guiders were found only with commanders of the Indian army. Our squads obtained twenty guiders at a cost of nearly ten thousand rupees. Some arms reached us from sources

that we could never think of. Moreover there was no arms act in Hyderabad and arms could be bought in shops on payment. In this and many ways we procured arms and supplied them to the guerillas.

Good marksmen were born among the guerillas and many attained good expertise in tactics of guerilla warfare.

The small army camps established by the nizam proved to be useless in suppressing such a mighty armed struggle. Instead bigger camps with larger number of soldiers were opened. The soldiers raided villages in the day, committed atrocities and returned to their base. Such was their daily routine and they never had the courage to stay in the villages at night. They shot village leaders and killed all young men with vengeance. People were subjected to extreme brutalities and torture to make them betray their leaders. Properties were looted, houses of prominent villagers burnt and sometimes whole villages were wiped out in flames. Suspected persons were burnt alive or buried alive in pits.

I visited a village that was a victim of their ghastly brutalities. This was a big village near Madhira with three to four hundred houses, and set on fire by pouring petrol and kerosene. The nizam's savage army surpassed the murderous nazis when they massacred forty to fifty young men in a line in a village in Jangaon taluka. My native village of Bollepalli was raided one early morning by the police razakars. They put my house on fire by pouring petrol. As soon as they left the village people extinguished the fire but by then half of the house was burnt and the other half was saved. Village leader Ravi Lakshman Reddy, Hanumanth Reddy and eight others were shot dead.

Policemen and soldiers while on the rampage never stayed in the village as they were afraid of sudden attacks by our squads. Therefore they killed those who were caught and burnt as much as possible. Such holocaust had become quite normal in Telengana villages but this did not lead to any demoralisation among the people. Any loss of morale was only temporary, and in a moment they pledged and marched ahead to destroy the enemy. They sought revenge, and young men's hands searched for arms.

Our squads intensified the struggle. I have already stated that the membership of a squad increased to a hundred. Various

squads in the neighbourhood joined together and laid siege to the military camps and demolished them. A particular strategy called 'Oodara' was adopted when the camps did not surrender. Bundles of hay were tied together making a ring around the camp and put on fire, straw ropes were ignited and thrown inside the camp. Soldiers and razakars who were firing from behind the walls, unable to bear the heat and smoke, would come out with raised hands. Arms were taken away from those who surrendered and those who did not do so were killed. In such battles Bhimreddi Narsimha Reddy displayed enormous courage.

These squads were actively aided in their raids by men and women of the villages. They provided the squad members with water and food while the battles raged for hours together. Women went in changed attire to gather information about the military camps and passed it on to our squads. They also participated in battles with pots of chilli powder, kept vigil on the routes of the police and killed them. Hundreds of such raids occurred all over Telengana. Guerilla warfare was able to hit at the enemy but did not reach the stage of establishing liberated areas.

In this intensified period of guerilla warfare the nizam government's administration came to a standstill, officials and landlords ran away from the villages and sought shelter in towns and Indian union territory. Responsibility of village administration was taken over by guerilla squads. Village governments were born and committees were formed in four thousand villages comprising of persons who took part in the struggle. Our movement which had begun with abolition of taxes, forced labour and with distribution of landlords' lands went ahead with the people distributing thousands of acres of waste, fallow and poramboke land. They took to cultivation of these lands. Lands enjoyed by the landlords with false revenue certificates were taken over and distributed. A ceiling on landlord's holding was fixed and the rest distributed among the people, particularly among agricultural labourers and landless poor. All the lands, implements and cattle of landlords who were allies of the enemy were taken over and distributed. Documents of debts with moneylenders and landlords were destroyed and such debts made infructuous. Hundreds of quintals of foodgrains were taken over from the godowns of traitors and given away to

the people. Wages of agricultural labour were raised. Toddy tappers were given toddy trees free of cost. People undertook the work of digging a number of small tanks, canals and feeder channels from lakes for creating dependable supply of water for crops. Provision of minimum medical facilities was made available. At one time cholera spread in an epidemic form. People were inoculated against this. I remember two of the doctors who served the people—Dr Paranjape and Dr Ramdas. They moved about fearlessly in the areas of struggle and provided medical aid. I do not now remember others who might have rendered such service.

Wood required for agricultural implements was freely available in government forests. Women's right to divorce was recognised. People's courts were organised to try and punish enemies of the people. Illiteracy was wiped out during these glorious days. Many widow-marriages were performed and out-dated customs showed a decline. Theft almost disappeared. Political and cultural activity was conducted on a large scale. Many became literate through night schools. Thus these villages were aglow with a new political and social consciousness.

7. POLICE ACTION

By September 1948 the people's revolutionary struggles spread by leaps and bounds engulfing a major part of the districts of Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar and Khammam. Medak district also came into its fold. Administration of the nizam came to a standstill in all these areas.

Even while the armed struggle was in progress earlier the central leadership of the Congress particularly Sardar Patel entered into negotiations with the nizam for a compromise. Congress leaders asked for the accession of Hyderabad state to the Indian union—handing over the subjects of defence, foreign affairs, communications and currency to the centre. This was rejected by the nizam who wished to be independent. Although the talks failed Congress leaders did not give up their compromising attitude. They entered into a shameful standstill agreement ignoring the glorious struggle raging all over Telengana. According to this agreement the nizam could appoint agents-general in other countries and the government may also have its agent-general in Hyderabad. K. M. Munshi, a disciple of Sardar Patel, came over to Hyderabad as India's agent-general.

Nowhere did this agreement make any mention of the fighting people of the state. Above all the agreement provided for the withdrawal of Indian forces stationed in Secunderabad. The nizam sought to drown the people's struggle in blood by making use of the agreement. All sections of people in the state including congressmen were dissatisfied with this compromise although it might have pleased the central leaders.

Congress leaders at the centre and in the state might have viewed with concern the increasing popularity and strength of the Communist Party and its struggles in the state. Perhaps Munshi

also sent a similar report. Afraid of the growing popularity of the Communist Party, the Indian armies commenced their police action on Hyderabad even before the period of standstill agreement came to an end. As soon as people of border villages learnt of the entry of Indian forces, they demolished razakar camps and destroyed buildings of landlords that housed razakar and nizam's military camps. They got rid of all traitors and tyrants. In the Maharashtra and Karnataka areas of the state Hindus rose and even indulged in atrocities on Muslim population. No such incidents ever took place in Telengana where the movement led by Andhra Mahasabha and Communist Party was never communally oriented. Our squads intervened and saved Muslims in the villages that lacked proper leadership. Our squads even took up the work of getting razakars pardoned by the people. Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy's eldest son was a leader of razakars. He planned to escape in a goods train to Hyderabad to save himself. People came to know of this and dragged him out of the train and killed him on the platform.

Razakars who made tall claims till then took to their heels even at the very first onslaught of the Indian army. The nizam and his army surrendered to the Indian army under the Command of General J. N. Chaudhuri.

Military rule commenced in the state under General Chaudhuri. There are three main objectives of the police action. Firstly, to end the nizam's rule in the state and merge it in the Indian union, secondly, to weaken the authority of the feudal forces to some extent and, thirdly, to suppress the Communist Party and eliminate it if possible. To some extent the police action had an anti-feudal character which is amply proved by the abolition of jagirdari system and enactment of tenancy legislation by the military government.

People of the state welcomed the police action. In the absence of landlords in the villages the rich and middle peasants led these receptions. People expressed their joy and approval by garlanding and showering flowers on Indian soldiers who were moving through the villages.

No sooner had the Indian army entered the state and with the advent of military rule attacks on communists were made. The happiness of the people at the Indian army's entry and change

in their attitudes were recognised by certain comrades and as such the armed struggle should have been withdrawn. But the party saw only the anticommunism of the army but not other aspects of the problem. It was a historical blunder on the part of the party to decide that we should also fight against the Indian army. As a result it lost and sacrificed a large number of fighters. This mistake provided an opportunity for Sardar Patel who began an attack with all military strength to fulfil his aim of wiping out the Communist Party. Attacks on the party were made in all regions at the same time. Within a month or two military camps were established in all areas. Mobilising five to six thousand soldiers and carrying out raids through encirclement of five to six villages, the army began eliminating our squads. Squads in many villages were wiped out in this fashion. People were made victims of severe violence and repression and they were asked to resign from the party. They were beaten with lathis and bayonets and tortured to the extreme—like peeling the skin in the design of hammer and sickle. The army concentrated its attacks particularly on families of party and squad members. Arrested comrades were tortured most brutally and shot dead in the presence of the people. There was a regular decline in the membership of squads. Squads that were encircled on all sides fought to the last and fell. They tried to move away into safer areas as far as possible after learning of the army's arrival. Yet defence and protection of the squads became a task beyond our strength and capacity. As the army attacked in thousands it became impossible for the people and squads to offer any resistance. The very same masses who had protected our squads like the apple of their eye could not withstand the brutal onslaught of the military. It became difficult to afford protection to squads and workers leading to severe losses for the party. In these raids some district organisers, important provincial leaders, members of area committees and squad leaders were caught and became victims of inhuman and brutal torture. The party was in a state of disarray as a result of these largescale arrests. Thousands of comrades were either arrested or resigned from the party unable to withstand cruel torture. Those who resigned were all put behind bars. With a membership of thousands the party strength dwindled to hundreds by the end of 1948. Fifty to hundred members were left in each taluka. They were not

able to face the army in the plains and as such it became essential to move into forest areas for selfdefence.

The brutalities and cruel terror to which party members were subjected to surpassed all the crimes of the razakars.

Facing such severe limitations and having to give up all hope of life every moment the squad members continued to fight obeying the directives of the party. This was their moment of trial. Membership of squads that used to be of company strength came down to two or three. Many instances are known of such squads fighting a numerically superior enemy with unparalleled courage and losing their lives in the end. Only a few squads continued to fight in the plains whereas all other squads went into the jungles for selfdefence. The forests of Nallamalla range, Adilabad, Warangal, Karimnagar and Bastar became the bases of our squads. There they worked among Gonds, Koyas and other forest people, took up their problems and continued their fight. The nature and form of exploitation of the tribal people by those from the plains came out very clearly before the party through these experiences. Our squads undertook the same work which is being done today by naxalites. They strove to build a movement and realise the rights of the tribal people through their mobilisation. Forest guards disappeared and forest wealth was freely obtained by the people. After some time, military camps appeared even in these areas. As the army continued its search and chase of our squads they entered into dark inaccessible forests. Such conditions prevailed till 1951. The Communist Party took stock of the situation at this stage and resolved to stop the armed struggle. And the struggle came to an end.

8. LESSONS AND IDEOLOGICAL SUMMING UP OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE

During the period after the Bhongir conference of Andhra Mahasabha people's enthusiasm increased enormously. An upsurge against the nizam, his puppets, jagirdars and zamindars was in progress beginning with Jangaon taluka from where it gradually spread into other areas. A correct recognition of the character of the upsurge and a proper assessment are essential. It was not a revolution for people's democracy as some extremist friends seem to imagine. Such an upsurge was not peculiar to Telengana, it was there in most provinces and princely states. There was upsurge not only among workers and peasants as manifested in the tebhaga movement in Bengal, struggles against talukdars and zamindars in UP, strikes, but also among middle classes, police, military and practically all sections of the population all over the country. This is a part of the anti-imperialist democratic upsurge which embraced the people of the princely states as well. It was true of states like Kashmir, Travancore, Mysore, Bhopal and Rajasthan. Similarly Hyderabad state had its upsurge. But what were the reasons for this struggle to be so intense and deeprooted in Telengana alone?

The feudal conditions in Hyderabad state were in no way special and peculiar to it, far worse conditions prevailed in states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. All the same, why did not similar intense struggles take place there? There are some special reasons for this. Firstly, the nizam was not only a native ruler but also a Muslim ruler belonging to a minority ruling over the Hindus who were an overwhelming majority of the population. His administration displayed an attitude of partiality. Even religious liberties were absent for the Hindus. The languages of Hyderabad

state, Telugu, Marathi and Kannada, and their cultures were suppressed. In terms of religion there existed similarities between Hyderabad and Kashmir but no control over matters of language and culture was exercised by the ruling class in Kashmir. Language of the people and the ruler in Kashmir was the same. As such there was no question of any suppression of people's language and culture. A contrary situation existed here. Secondly, it was the Communist Party which formulated a correct economic and social programme and slogans and led the upsurge. Such a situation never existed in any state. Thirdly, those who earned the reputation of being nationalist leaders in the state and were prominent in the State Congress joined the Communist Party and led it while laying a broad basis for the people's upsurge. Fourthly, the strongest of all the units of the Communist Party of India was the Andhra party which stood by our struggle. The struggle in Telengana assumed special place and significance due to these four reasons.

India attained independence on 15 August 1947 which had its impact on the people's upsurge in the state. The movement not only was deeprooted but also expanded. It created a broadbased united front of people against the nizam and razakars. Some landlords also allied themselves with the struggle as they found that the ruler exploiting them was a Muslim who also suppressed their language and culture. Those who joined hands with and participated in this united struggle were workers, peasants, businessmen and patriotic landlords. Some of them even laid down their lives. In fact this struggle assumed the form of a united front with a wide basis of support. The State Congress too was a part of it. Congress squads also fought shoulder to shoulder with our squads. But it happened only for a short while.

The second congress of the Communist Party of India was held in February 1948 at Calcutta. Decisions of this congress completely upset all these conditions. It stated that a revolutionary crisis existed all over India against the bourgeoisie and that the independence achieved on 15 August 1947 was not real but only a change in rulers. Further it went on to say that the Congress leadership was a puppet of imperialism and visualised the spread of revolution from cities to villages. Such harmful resolutions were adopted by the party congress.

A complete change of tactics of the Telengana struggle came about after the second party congress. Extreme attitudes were adopted and similar decisions were taken. The broadbased united front of our struggle was disrupted. Extreme measures were to be adopted in implementation of the programme of struggle.

Previously the ceiling on landholding was fifty acres of wet land and two hundred acres of dry land. This was drastically reduced and a decision was even taken permitting only two to three acres for every member of a family. Such an attitude of left-infantile adventurism was expressed in all other matters. In spite of adopting such extremist postures the main political problems of the state, viz accession of the nizam to Indian union and an end to the atrocities of the razakars, were not solved even in 1948. Consequently no serious harm and damage was done to our movement by left-adventurist policies. However the harmful results of adventurist policies became too obvious immediately after the police action. People rejected the decision of the party to continue the struggle. Some agricultural labourers and poor peasants were inclined to continue the struggle but they could not do anything in the face of opposition from the middle and rich peasants.

A cardinal principle of the theory of guerilla warfare is that direct as well as indirect participation of the people is indispensable in an armed struggle and their mere sympathy is not sufficient for the purpose. This basic law was thrown overboard.

People's role in struggles diminished after the police action. People stopped participation in these struggles and as a consequence the movement lost its character of a people's upsurge and degenerated into individual terrorism by a few squad members. The naxalite movement today has a similar character.

The struggle till the police action is of a glorious character. It achieved tremendous victories. Our comrades fought and laid down their lives facing many dangerous situations that emerged later on. Their sacrifices were bereft of any selfinterest. They were noble and imbued with a spirit of selfsacrifice. And they shall have a permanent place in history like Bhagat Singh and others.

The Congress then had immense prestige in the country. People had many illusions that the Congress assuming power after

independence would remove their difficulties and improve their lot. Immediately after the police action people in Hyderabad state viewed the Congress as having liberated them from nizam's autocratic rule.

Along with this political prestige the Congress had enormous military power at its disposal. The British handed over their army and a strongly entrenched bureaucracy to the Congress. The party did not have any understanding of the possibility of such a powerful Congress government intervening in Hyderabad state.

The tactics to be adopted by us in the event of such intervention were not even thought of. While the people's movement was in the stage of armed struggle, the need for change in tactics in accordance with new realities arising out of sudden change in political conditions was not even imagined. And when such a situation did arise no plans were formulated in tune with it.

No thinking on these lines was possible after the second party congress. We only advanced along with our squads but did not plan for a retreat. As a result it became impossible to retreat after the police action. However impossible or difficult it may be we should have withdrawn the armed struggle.

The development of a broad united front of people against the nizam has already been mentioned. With the police action some of the objectives of the struggle were accomplished. Nizam's rule ended and with that of the jagirdars and zamindars. Terror inflicted by razakars came to an end. Therefore a large majority of people disapproved continuation of armed struggle after police action. We should have adopted new forms of struggle in these changed circumstances.

Congressmen exhibited great deal of anticommunism in those days but there was a difference between Patel and Nehru in their opposition to communists. Nehru sought to enforce the constitution through democratic means. He had the capacity to tolerate even parties that opposed it. But Patel was a staunch anticommunist. It does not require any explanation as to what would have been the situation if we could have utilised this difference and stopped the armed struggle. Lives of many important leaders could have been saved and the state of the movement also much better.

Another theory came to the fore after the police action. This

was the Chinese path. Directives were issued for the party to prepare itself for a prolonged struggle and revolution that would develop in India as in China. Conditions not only in Telengana but all over India were estimated to be favourable and congenial for armed guerilla warfare. This revolution was supposed to extend and spread into cities from villages. History bears testimony to the fallacy of drawing this parallel between India and China on the basis of imaginary similarities and also the difficult conditions we had to face as well as the undesirable consequiences flowing from it. Our squads which were fighting in jungles with this political understanding had eventually to make raids even to get their rations.

In this period the party lost some of its finest leaders and comrades who shone like jewels. Prior to the police action people sacrificed their lives to save our comrades but subsequently it was our comrades who in large number fought and became martyrs.

In spite of all such mistakes this struggle in its totality is full of immense glory that deserves to be written in letters of gold in modern Indian history. Lakhs of people took part in this struggle, thousands laid down their lives and were victims of untold miseries. It yielded innumerable good results. People in Telengana developed interest and extraordinary spirit of sacrifice. It raised their consciousness to a higher level.

Some of the good results are as follows :

(1) Lakhs of acres of land went to the tiller. Waste and fallow lands were secured by the tillers. Landlords did not succeed in their attempts to reoccupy tenancy lands. Tenants became owners of these lands after the tenancy act.

(2) Jagirdari system was abolished and people of jagir villages became free.

(3) After the withdrawal of our struggle landlords sold their lands to the peasants at a low price. Peasants bought land at a low price, even at ten rupees per acre.

(4) Concentration of land with a few landlords who had grabbed thousands of acres from poor people was destroyed and with this change a new process of tillers getting the landlord's land began.

(5) Forced labour came to an end. Unjust collections by landlords and their atrocities ceased.

(6) Nizam's government disappeared and was replaced by bourgeois democracy. This victory had tremendous significance. British imperialists intended to keep the Hyderabad state as a festering sore in the heart of India. They collaborated in the supply of arms to the nizam from outside India. The Indian bourgeoisie aided this conspiracy through compromise in the shape of the standstill agreement. The standstill agreement virtually meant giving independence to the nizam. The Telengana people's struggle shattered this conspiracy to pieces through its continuous growth and expansion. The Indian bourgeoisie launched the police action against the nizam even before the period of the standstill agreement expired.

(7) The Telengana struggle brought into forefront the importance of the land problem.

(8) It strengthened the movement for linguistic states in India.

9. AFTER THE POLICE ACTION

It was July 1948 when I was living on the borders of Warangal district. My health was badly shattered and petty physical ailments became acute leading to severe pain in the knees. I went on frequent tour of the areas of our struggle. I found myself unable to walk. Realising that delay may lead to dangerous consequences I went to Bangalore for treatment. While I was undergoing treatment there the police action took place. Baddam Yella Reddy also came over there for treatment as he too was not keeping good health. After the police action, the police in Bangalore came to know of our stay there and were after us. We had foreseen this and left the residence on a tour of Mysore state. The police raided the house on the very next day. While leaving the house we were extremely careful in not leaving any trace of our stay. So nothing untoward happened to the owner of the house. We felt that our stay in Mysore state was no more safe and with the help of the Mysore provincial committee of the party we returned to Hyderabad. The comrade who received us in Hyderabad took us to a house where previously a number of our comrades had taken shelter. But there was a complete change in the attitude of the owner after police action which made it clear that we could no more get shelter in that house. On that day we had to move into the house of Raj Bahadur Gour's father. That very night we went to another shelter of the party.

Around January 1949 Yella Reddy and I secretly toured the areas of Bhongir, Ramannapet and Sharkhi talukas. By then Indian army camps were not established in these areas. But a major part of our squads had already melted away and only ten remained in each squad. The transformation among the people

was clearly visible to us. We could not see any enthusiasm among them for the struggle. Although people were providing food to our comrades, they lacked the affection that was displayed earlier.

Yella Reddy was arrested while touring Jangaon taluka. I went around these areas for some time when military camps were being established. Sathi Reddy, the area leader, persuaded me to go to Hyderabad as he felt I was not safe in that region.

I went to Sharkhi taluka but with military camps coming up there I moved over to Hyderabad. I lived an underground life in Hyderabad for a long time. Sardar Patel visited the city during this period. He threatened not to spare the life of any communist and declared that the leaders were in the city as they were not traceable in any other part of the state. He gave a stern warning to all those and Muslims in particular in the city who gave protection to communists. Further he threatened officials with punishment if they did not arrest communists immediately. Prior to Patel's speech the police did not use severe torture and brutal methods on those arrested in the city but they did so after his speech and traced the movements of other comrades. Then I left for Bombay, stayed there for some time and returned to my shelter in Hyderabad.

Due to the crisis that had overtaken the party there was a weakening of interest and determination among comrades to fight. Unable to withstand brutal torture, arrested comrades began to leak out information about their own shelters and others that they knew. A comrade from Adilabad came over to my place, stayed for three days and went to a shelter of the Hyderabad district committee of the party. This shelter was raided by the police after a few days. This comrade was not able to stand cruel torture and exposed our shelter. Sensing such a possibility we changed our place of residence. Along with me were my wife, Ch. Rajeswara Rao, his wife and brother. A little earlier, I had received a message from S. A. Dange to visit Bombay. I went to Bombay sending the others to a different area. I left instructions that we should not make use of that particular house unless we received news from the Adilabad comrade that he had not exposed it to the police.

I spent nearly two months in Bombay, Poona and Sholapur.

To find out the possibility of my going back to Hyderabad I sent a comrade there. I received a message that I could return. The comrade who accompanied me to Hyderabad took me into the same house which we had felt was already being watched by the police. On enquiry comrades revealed that it was safe and had not been raided during the two months but their words did not give me confidence. I still believed that it was under police surveillance. Perhaps the police had waited patiently so long to get hold of a big fish like me. In these circumstances it appeared impossible to continue to live underground. I decided on my own to come out openly from underground life. News was published in the papers that I would be out in the open in a week's time. Immediately I moved from that house to another area. Police seem to have learnt rather late of my arrival in that house and that is why no immediate raid was made. I came out into the open in September 1951 and moved about freely in Hyderabad. The day I came out police raided the house in the afternoon at 2 p.m. and were disappointed not to find me. But they arrested Ch. Rajeswara Rao and a few others.

Press correspondents caught hold of me and asked a number of questions but I declined to answer them. However I only told them that I had come out of exile with the intention of taking part in the election. The next morning I was arrested.

We learnt that at a cabinet meeting the previous night the Vellodi ministry had taken a decision to arrest me. After being imprisoned as a detenu for two and a half months I was released on 5 December 1951 on parole for three months to enable me to participate in the election.

At this stage it is necessary to mention my wife, Seeta Devi. Although not highly educated she took part in all political activities with great enthusiasm right from the days of Andhra Mahasabha. For two years she lived in underground along with me bearing all difficulties and was of immense help. Her co-operation gave me strength and encouragement.

The whole country was preparing itself for the first general election. Many political parties issued manifestos and were entering the arena. I was released just then. I had submitted my nomination papers for the Nalgonda parliamentary and Bhongir

assembly constituencies even while I was in prison. Aruna Asaf Ali was touring Telengana on the eve of my release. While she was in the Socialist Party she used to bitterly attack the Communist Party. After a tour of the Soviet Union and East European countries her views underwent a transformation and she joined the Communist Party. I met her and discussed a number of matters.

Our election committee met and prepared an election programme. It felt that it was not necessary for me to work in my constituency and decided that I should take charge of organising election work in Warangal district.

I went to my village to see my mother after five years of underground and prison life. People gave me a tremendous welcome and expressed their affection. Later on I embarked upon the organisation of election work in Warangal district. I was accompanied by Arutla Lakshminarsimha Reddy and Dhage. We were given an enthusiastic reception by the people of Warangal town. Twenty thousand people attended a public meeting the same night. Thus commenced our election activity in Warangal district.

We were immediately confronted with a serious problem. Two thousand workers of the party from the districts of Warangal, Nalgonda and Karimnagar were released from prison on parole and were taking part in the election campaign. Their parole period was to end on 18, 19, 20 and 21 December.

They were to go back to prison after these dates which would have meant a serious setback to our election campaign. Jawaharlal Nehru was visiting Warangal on 17th of the same month to address a public meeting. The then chief minister M. K. Vellodi arrived in Warangal on 14th for making necessary arrangements. Our friend Dhage was acquainted with Vellodi. Having come into contact with communists only during the underground period Dhage was not conversant with our methods of work. He asked me if I would like to meet Vellodi. He seemed to have doubts about communist willingness to talk to officials. I said I would certainly meet him.

On the evening of 14 December Dhage and I went to see Vellodi at the collector's residence. A strange incident happened there. Vellodi was drinking whisky when we went in but then

sent the bottle inside. After my introduction to him by Dhage he made courteous enquiries. We talked for a while and then he asked me : "Mr Reddy, would you have a drink?" I did not then know the meaning of the word 'drink', I thought it to be some cold drink and said 'yes'. Dhage looked at me with surprise which I did not understand. It was only when the collector poured some whisky into a glass that I realised the meaning of drink. I had never tasted liquor before but thought it would be against etiquette to decline now, having agreed wittingly or unwittingly. Whisky in the glass was also in large quantity which I drank at one gulp. There was a slight reeling sensation in my head.

Then we discussed our problem which was resolved very easily. Vellodi agreed to release permanently all the prisoners who were on parole, and he did release them all. He appeared to be favourably inclined to democracy and elections and also an admirer of Nehru. But whisky had gone to my head. I was to address a public meeting immediately at Hanmakonda. A. Lakshminarsimha Reddy and V. D. Deshpande were among the speakers along with me.

I went to the meeting straight from Vellodi's place. I was in no state to make a speech. The meeting was already delayed and ten thousand people were waiting for me. The other speakers did not turn up. The organisers hurriedly made me speak first. I stood before the microphone and announced the acceptance by Vellodi to release our comrades. There was unending applause. Just then A. Lakshminarsimha Reddy and V. D. Despande arrived. I told the audience of my headache, apologised and took my seat leaving the platform to other speakers.

Subsequently our election campaign went ahead like an epic march. Everywhere we were given rousing reception by thousands of people and smothered in garlands. They applied vermilion (tilak) to our foreheads and gave gifts. People attended our meetings in thousands. On one occasion our car got stuck in the sand of a riverbed. Learning of this hundreds of people from neighbouring villages came and lifted the car safely on the bank of the river. People showed extraordinary regard and affection for the Communist Party. In the election in Warangal

district we won twelve assembly seats and two parliamentary seats with an overwhelming majority. T. B. Vithal Rao won the Khammam parliamentary seat. All the candidates opposing him, including the Congress nominee, lost their deposits. This comrade is no more in our midst.

It is necessary to state certain facts about the election to the Mulug assembly seat. This constituency is eighty miles in length and most of the area between Mulug to Bhadrachalam is covered by dense forests. We never hoped to win this seat. Gundavaram Hanumantha Rao was asked to file the nomination papers when he wanted to work in the election office. Not much efforts were made since we thought that this seat would be lost any way. Except for a few villages near Mulug, people of the constituency did not know our election symbol and programme. All that they did know was that a communist candidate was in the contest.

Polling in Narsampet in Warangal taluka concluded on 31 January 1952. We were confident of winning that seat. Polling was to be held in Mulug constituency on 3 February. Seeing the enthusiastic response of the people we decided to try this constituency as well. With only two days left we began to try our best.

On the night of 31 January we started off in Dhage's army truck with fifty rupees, fifty gallons of petrol and only fifteen workers. I wrote to Kondabolu Venkayya to bring some workers from Madhira taluka. Our journey was through dark forests and we had already been warned of tigers in the forest. In fact a tiger did come in our way at two in the night. It ran for two hundred yards in front of our car and moved away. We reached Kothagudem at five in the morning and after coffee we went to Burgampahad at nine. This was the extreme end of Mulug constituency. At the sight of our flag and hearing slogans the news of the arrival of communists spread fast in no time. A thousand people gathered in the centre of the town. I made an appeal for money, a place to house our office, petrol, a residential house and food arrangements for us. Immediately, a Muslim peasant got up and suggested that we occupy a local temple and choultry which none would oppose. We occupied the choultry. We wanted to take our lunch in a restaurant but

its owner was afraid of aiding us. Peasants who had come from the nearby village of Reddipalayam invited us for food and we gladly accepted. We hired all cycles in town, divided all the workers into groups and asked them to campaign and work day and night till polling day. A public meeting was held that night and four to five thousand people attended. An independent candidate contesting for the same seat donated one hundred rupees and arranged our dinner in his house.

Some peasants who were victims of police atrocities in Katuru and Elamarru villages in Andhra had migrated to Mulug taluka, purchased lands and settled down. They met me next morning and requested us to shift our camp to their village and also promised to bear all election expenses. So we shifted our election camp to their village. Meanwhile Kondabolu Venkayya came along with workers from Madhira taluka. I handed over my car to him. Due to ill-health I took rest for some time.

Arutla Lakshminarsimha Reddy and other colleagues from the Mulug side and we from Burgampahad side tried to cover the constituency as far as possible. Yet we could not go to many villages. After the counting of votes we found that we had secured six thousand out of thirty thousand votes polled, whereas the Congress candidate got five thousand. Rest of the votes were divided among independent candidates.

In my constituency of Nalgonda district we won all the fourteen assembly seats. I addressed only two meetings in the constituency. Nearly forty thousand people attended the meeting at Suryapet. The election campaign in the district was like a victory march. We won both the parliamentary seats.

I won the Nalgonda parliamentary seat as well as Bhongir assembly seat. I secured the largest number of votes in any parliamentary constituency all over India. I earned the reputation of having secured more votes than even Jawaharlal Nehru. But it would be wrong to assess personalities on the basis of votes. This fact came out into the open by the mistake made by congressmen themselves. As soon as the election results in Nehru's constituency were out the AICC office announced hurriedly that he had polled the highest number of votes in the country. Challenging this our party central office announced my voting figures. Nehru had secured over two lakhs of votes

whereas I got more than three lakhs. Thus the question of highest voting figures came to be publicised. Otherwise after the election nobody bothers about votes polled by different persons. My personality is not the only reason for my getting so many votes. The glorious struggle of the people of Nalgonda is the vital and crucial reason. Another is the atrocities committed by the Indian army after the police action in Nalgonda district to totally wipe out the Communist Party. I have never considered the votes to be a result of personality factor because Sunkam Achalu, the harijan candidate in my double-member constituency, also polled more votes than Jawaharlal Nehru.

After we won all the fourteen assembly seats in Nalgonda district in the first general election the legislator from Miryalaguda constituency resigned from the assembly. He did not wish to remain in the party. As a result a byelection was held. Devulapalli Venkateswar Rao as the party candidate and Kanchenpalli Pedavenkatrama Rao on behalf of the Congress contested the election. Venkateswar Rao was then still in exile. One of our election camps was in Nidamanoor, a roadside village. Sundarayya and myself were staying in that camp. Congressmen stooped to mean methods in this byelection in order to win prestige in the district. They indulged in various acts of violence. A military camp was also located a hundred yards from our camp. In addition to this the Congress imported thousands of workers and goondas from Hyderabad.

Forty goondas raided our election office. All the vengeance of congressmen was concentrated on me in those days as I had obtained the highest number of votes in the country. Along with Sundarayya and four or five others I was in the office. Seeing the goondas coming I went out to stop them but soon a torrent of lathis descended on me and I fell down badly injured on the head and shoulder. I had a young man as my body-guard. When I fell down he covered me with his body and took upon himself all the lathi blows. Later on the goondas left me and attacked Sundarayya who was also there. He received more grievous wounds than me and had his leg bone fractured.

The news of this attack was published not only in all Indian newspapers but also in the papers in Moscow. Having read this

news many leaders, friends and relatives came down to Miryalaguda. From Delhi Ajoy Ghosh, general secretary of the party, also arrived. Miryalaguda was suddenly transformed into a big news-centre. With all this violence the Congress was able to win by a thousand votes only.

We did not fight the election in the name of the Communist Party but joined hands with other democratic forces and groups in the People's Democratic Front and fought under its banner. Dhage lost the election in a constituency in Warangal district. Subsequently he was sent to the Rajya Sabha by the party.

I contested from Bhongir assembly constituency in the second general election. It has already been stated that I had won this assembly seat along with Nalgonda parliamentary seat in the first general election. I retained the parliamentary seat and resigned the assembly seat for which a byelection was held. Govinddoss Shroff was the PDF candidate and he lost to a Congress candidate by two hundred votes. Congressmen ridiculed us for the defeat. The Communist Party therefore decided that I should contest this constituency in the 1957 general election. Congress leaders pledged themselves to defeat me in this election and set up V. Ramachandra Reddy as their candidate. Ramachandra Reddy is a resident of Pochampalli village in Bhongir taluk. He is related to me, being the elder brother of my wife. In the bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave he was the first donor. He is an extremely nice person but naive.

Such an innocent person was cajoled into the election arena by the Congress. Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan advised him against entering the election fray but to no avail. Utilising his reputation as the first donor in the bhoodan movement, congressmen sought to get me defeated by him. But they forgot that much earlier I had donated a much larger area of land than Ramachandra Reddy. During the struggle for land in the taluka I had distributed five hundred acres of land from my property to the rural poor.

I explained the implications of Congress strategy to Ramachandra Reddy, impressed upon him how he was being used to get me defeated and warned him not to fall into their trap. But all this was of no use. Eventually the contest took place. I had to work

a little hard. I addressed about sixty meetings in the constituency. The result of the election went against him, he lost by a margin of eight thousand votes. I won the seat and thus concluded the contest between brothers-in-law.

The bhoodan movement was born in the village of Pochampalli in Bhongir taluka. In course of his tour of Telengana villages Vinoba Bhave camped in this village. The local harijans told him, during the course of his prayer meeting, of their need for land. Vinobaji asked if there was someone in the audience who could give land to the harijans. From amongst the audience V. Ramachandra Reddy announced a donation of hundred acres of land. Thus began the bhoodan movement of Vinobaji.

Vinobaji's movement spread to other parts of the country yielding lakhs of acres of land.

We are not opponents of bhoodan movement. We are not foolhardy to oppose any method through which poor people may get land.

But we cannot agree with the ideology behind bhoodan. It is argued that this movement is the result of the change of heart that has come about among landlords. This is a baseless argument. In fact this change is a direct consequence of the pressure exerted by the people's struggles. Vinobaji also warned that there would be a peasant revolution if landlords did not come forward to donate land.

Why is it that the bhoodan movement was born in Telengana and not in any other part of India? Is it not due to the peasants' armed struggle? Did not the land problem assume immense significance in Asia with the victory of the Chinese revolution? Why did Gandhiji not take up the bhoodan concept during his life time if change of heart was all that simple and easy? Obviously because the Chinese revolution had not yet fulfilled itself. And in no part of India did the problem assume the character of an armed struggle. Evidently conditions had not matured.

I had an opportunity to discuss this matter with Vinobaji. After the police action he sent me a message through Swami Ramanand Tirtha for a meeting. I could not meet him in those conditions. A few years later I met him in Shamsabad (a village near Hyderabad) while he was on padayatra. We discussed for an

hour. I presented my views on bhoodan in clear terms. I got the impression that he fully understood me.

Behind V. Ramachandra Reddy's donation of land is a factor to be taken note of. Under the impact of the peasantry's struggle for land my father-in-law, V. Narsimha Reddy, had during his last days instructed his son to donate some land in his name after his death. Accordingly Ramachandra Reddy donated this land. This makes it very clear how the peasants' struggle for land was a prelude to the bhoodan movement.

10. 'HEROIC TELENGANA MINE, NOT SEPARATE TELENGANA'

The police action took place in September 1948 and the administration was carried on under the authority of General J. N. Chaudhuri. Subsequently M. K. Vellodi took over as civil administrator. The general election was held in Hyderabad in 1952 leading to the establishment of a ministry headed by Burgula Ramakrishna Rao. People who for a long time were groaning under the monstrous rule of the nizam now entertained many hopes about this ministry. For purposes of administrative convenience a number of officials from the Andhra costal districts and other parts of Madras state were brought to Hyderabad. The mistakes committed by these officials gave rise to a movement in Hyderabad city. The inability of the democratic government to satisfy the aspirations of the people for employment was the main cause of this movement. With slogans of 'Idli-sambar go back!' this movement broke out in the city against non-Telengana personnel. The common people were in the forefront of this emotionally-charged agitation. It was confined to Hyderabad city. They saw a dark future for themselves and this moved them into the agitation. A contributory factor was the misuse of power by the officials.

During the course of this agitation the government unleashed a wave of repression and there was great loss of government property. No political party or leader supported this. The movement cooled down in about a week's time. Nevertheless it is not incorrect to say that seeds of the later separate Telengana movement were sown in this agitation which came to be known as the mulki movement.

Andhra Pradesh was established in November 1956. The strug-

gle carried on by the Communist Party for many years with the slogan of Vishalaandhra now assumed a concrete shape. The Fazl Ali commission appointed for the purpose of states reorganisation recommended that Telengana be made into a separate state for a period of five years after which it may join Andhra in a larger state if its legislature so chose. But the central government did not accept this proposal. Making use of this opportunity some leaders in Telengana demanded that the commission's recommendation be implemented. They argued that Telengana should be a separate state in the event of division of Hyderabad state and that it should not be merged with the Andhra districts. The most important leaders of this movement were the uncle-nephew team —Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy and Dr M. Chenna Reddy. A section of the then student community lent its support to their slogan of separate Telengana. It was the Communist Party which fought against it with grit and determination by mobilising the people. The first meeting in this connection was held in Secunderabad in which I was the main speaker along with others. This separatist movement did not spread into the rural areas as expected by the leaders. Yet a number of students from Hyderabad went to the districts and tried to disturb our meetings which was foiled by the rural population. Be that as it may, this movement had a certain sweep as against the earlier mulki movement. We organised a Vishalaandhra convention in the Exhibition Grounds which was presided over by the poet Sri Sri. Baddam Yella Reddy was the chairman of the reception committee and I was its secretary. Delegates from both Andhra and Telengana regions participated in this convention. Subsequently another convention was held in the old city. Delegates from Telengana participated and I presided over it. The main objective of these conventions was to support the cause of Vishalaandhra.

Many public meetings were held, the most important among them was the one held on the Vivek Vardhani grounds. This was jointly organised by the Communist Party and pro-Vishalaandhra congressmen. Some separatist elements created trouble in the meeting. But they were beaten back by the people attending the meeting. Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, the chief minister, who till then was like a cat on the wall also turned into a protagonist of Vishalaandhra. He ordered the police to protect the meeting

from the separatist elements. The police taught the four to five hundred student disruptors a lesson and the meeting concluded successfully. Jawaharlal Nehru who was on tour declared that Andhra Pradesh would be formed. With this both the separatist leaders cooled down and their movement fizzled out. All the same the leaders were making some attempts which eventually resulted in the gentlemen's agreement. Allaying and removal of the fears of Telengana people was the primary objective of this agreement. It sought to provide safeguards to the people and employees of Telengana. Negotiations were held among Congress leadership in Delhi resulting in the gentlemen's agreement. But these "gentlemen" forgot the Communist Party which had all along striven hard for the formation of Vishalaandhra. The communist leaders were neither invited to the meetings nor were they consulted at any stage.

Agreement was arrived at and duly signed. But those who signed it never behaved like real gentlemen in as much as they did not implement it. It is obvious that they treated the whole question of Vishalaandhra as a part of the factional squabbles within the Congress. Their callous indifference to the problem of unity of Telugu people is unpardonable. The agreement was never put into practice as all those who signed it forgot it totally once they came to power.

Both the sides (Andhra and Telengana) were engrossed in providing safeguards for their own ministers. They did not bother about creation of safeguards for the people. Ministers from Telengana in spite of holding important and key portfolios and being responsible for the implementation of the provisions of the agreement never bothered about them. They only looked to their own seats of power. The central government too exhibited an attitude of indifference. There are two to three important items of the agreement which were not enforced. Firstly, not appointing a deputy chief minister from Telengana although Sanjivayya did appoint one. Secondly, discontent grew among the middle class due to nonimplementation of the terms of agreement regarding employment. Thirdly, the principle that revenue collected from Telengana should be spent on its development was thrown to the winds. While there was prohibition in the Andhra area there was none in Telengana. As a result Telengana had a substantial

excise revenue and surplus to its credit. These surplus funds were in all probability utilised in the other region. Although the Communist Party brought to the notice of the government the nonimplementation of the terms of the agreement from time to time, it also did not greatly concern itself and do very much about it. The Communist Party failed to make a proper assessment and estimation of the growing discontent among Telengana people.

In 1969 a student in Khammam went on hungerstrike as a protest against the neglect of the safeguards provided in the agreement. Behind this were some Congress leaders. The Communist Party too supported the movement for implementation of safeguards. This movement that commenced with the hungerstrike of a student secured the sympathy of the student community in Telengana. But this movement in the course of two months went astray and assumed a separatist character. At this juncture the Communist Party condemned it. The movement this time swept Telengana with great intensity. The main reasons for this are :

(1) Nonimplementation of safeguards.

(2) The display of a sense of superiority complex by some Andhras which led to an emotional crisis among Telengana people.

(3) The most important reason being the factional quarrels among congressmen for positions of power.

(4) Unabashed opportunism and selfishness of Telengana congressmen.

(5) Increased unemployment among the educated.

The period between the two separatist movements—1955-56 and 1969—witnessed an enormous increase in the number of educational institutions and students. Hundreds of high schools were established in every district. But unemployment assumed dangerous proportions due to the wrong policies of the government. With the frightening prospect of a dark future before them the students became restless. This discontent was fully utilised by the separatist leaders for their own selfish ends. The movement this time spread to the villages and brought into its fold the rural population. At this stage the disgruntled Dr Chenna Reddy

who was out of power jumped into the fray and brought together many of his sort. He captured the leadership of the Telengana Praja Samiti which had been formed a little earlier. The Telengana movement further intensified.

The Communist Party tried to organise the people to the best of its ability and face this intensified movement. Public meetings were held in Hyderabad. But after the police firing and killings in the meeting at Secunderabad it resolved not to hold any public meetings.

A delegation including me went to Delhi on behalf of the party, met the prime minister and presented a memorandum to her demanding the dismissal of the Brahmananda Reddy ministry. We happened to meet Nukala Ramachandra Reddy who told us that he was a protagonist of Vishalaandhra but later on he turned into a separatist and assumed leadership of the separatist movement. We tried to meet Dr Chenna Reddy who gave us an appointment at some place but never turned up. Thus ended our stay in Delhi. By then the agitation in Hyderabad city had assumed an extremely serious turn. It became impossible to hold any meetings in the city. However we did organise quite a few meetings in the districts. In the towns and villages of Nalgonda district we held a number of meetings and supported the unity of the state. No attempts were made to disrupt our meetings. But the situation in other districts was different. Our speeches in the districts of Telengana evoked feelings of goodwill among the people of Andhra region. Similarly the speeches of Chandra Rajeswara Rao in the Andhra area had a good impact on the people of Telengana.

The separatist movement descended to vulgar extremes. Obscene and insulting writings about Andhras and Andhra women filled the walls. As a person belonging to Telengana I felt ashamed at this. A movement that commenced with hungerstrikes and satyagraha passed into a new stage of burning of buses and post offices, destruction of government property and also burning of houses belonging to Andhras. Educational institutions were closed. All sorts of baseless slanders were put into circulation. This gave an opportunity for antisocial elements to have a field day. Andhra employees and teachers in the districts quit their work places and went away to Andhra. A significant aspect of this

movement that deserves our attention is that it was against those who belonged to Andhra only whereas all those whose mother-tongue was not Telugu were safe and secure.

The participants in this movement were landlords, rich peasants and middle class people who were connected with the students. Landless labour, working class in the towns and poor people did not concern themselves with this movement.

The government adopted a policy of ruthless repression in many areas in order to suppress a movement that erupted in a ceaseless manner. Lathicharges and firings became the order of the day. Many innocent people fell victim and lost their lives in these firings. Educational institutions were also transformed into temporary prisons. This way the government tried to suppress the movement through repressive measures.

This movement led by disgruntled leaders who were selfseekers and opportunists cooled off in as a brief period as it assumed an intense character. The main cause was the opportunist politics of the leaders. Differences cropped up among them and each proclaimed that his organisation was the real Telengana Praja Samiti. All political parties got split into two whle the movement was alive. It was only the Communist Party which did not become a victim to such splits and had the honour of standing united while fighting against the separate Telengana concept.

Regional imbalances and disparities and uneven development in a state are the primary causes of such movements. It would be difficult to say that such movements will not erupt in future unless such inequalities are totally wiped out.

I believe it would be possible to prevent such movements only when all political parties strive together with the prime objective of removing imbalances, developing the entire state and of creating emotional integration among the people.

While the movement was in full swing I issued a pamphlet condemning separatism which I am told made a deep impact on the people of the border talukas.

11. MY VILLAGE

My involvement in a number of activities after the first general election did not make me forget my village. Bollepalli in Bhongir taluka is my native village. I have always been striving for its development. With a population of 5000 it is considered to be a big one among the villages of the area. 95 per cent of the people are poor and their main source of livelihood is agriculture. A big tank and about a hundred wells provide water for agriculture. Before the police action the village was a part of the sarf-e-khas (nizam's own estate). There was not even a primary school then whereas now there is a high school with five to six hundred students. In my childhood it was something extraordinary to be an educated person in my village. Now there are five to six graduates, fifty matriculates and many more with lesser education. Many of them are working as teachers. Bollepalli is situated two miles away from the Bhongir-Nalgonda road. Formerly one had to walk the distance on a cross-country track. Now due to our efforts there is a good approach road for the traffic of carts and cars. Bus transport is also available in the village. I had to make a number of representations to get them realised.

The village was electrified in 1959 and there are about a hundred wells with electric pumpsets. Although power was supplied twelve years ago most people in the village lack the resources to provide their homes with electricity. Only a few have this facility. During my tenure as a member of parliament, I got a public telephone booth installed in the village which proves very useful in times of emergencies. An ayurvedic hospital with a doctor, two nurses and a compounder functions fairly well. Thirty to forty persons are treated daily. There is also a good veterinary hospital with a gazetted officer, a doctor, an assistant and a peon. It is

of great help to the animals in the village. While a number of facilities with government funds have been provided in this manner there is no improvement in the economic condition of the people. However much we try the situation remains the same as ever.

Keeping in view their economic condition and unemployment among the rural poor we distributed nearly four hundred acres of fallow land to them. It can be said that there is practically no fallow land available now in the village. Some of the cultivators of these lands have benefited by digging wells and operating them with electric pumpsets. Similarly we introduced a milk-production scheme to give some economic benefits to the people. Milk produced in the village is transported to Hyderabad city through government milk vans. Now there are nearly six hundred buffaloes and fifty Jersey cows in the village. Last year during a normal production season we were able to get 1200 litres of milk daily for supply to the city. The daily income from the sale of this milk is a thousand rupees. Annually the village earns an income of Rs. 3,60,000.

By introducing new strains of seeds based on the green revolution we have been able to improve agriculture. Thus it may be said that our village has made great progress since the police action.

Normally Bhongir taluka is drought-stricken. This is true of our village as well. In spite of so much progress in the village poverty has not been eradicated. Due to the unhelpful policies of the government the economic condition of the people does not show any improvement. The capitalist exploits the worker and the landlord the peasant. Cities fleece the villages. In matters of milk the village is the victim of this sort of exploitation. The price of milk was fixed by the government five years ago, but since then prices of all necessities of life have gone up enormously. Also while the price paid to us in the village has remained static during these five years, the price paid by the consumer in the towns has gone up.

In spite of all these difficulties milk-production in Bollepalli has become an ideal for others to emulate. The annual All-India Industrial Exhibition in Hyderabad is wellknown. The exhibition committee arranges for competitions between the various milk-

producing centres in Telengana. Bollepalli has been winning the first prize for the last three years. Formerly cow's milk was not produced in the village. We introduced it by bringing Jersey cows which have proved more profitable than buffaloes. They eat less and yield more milk than buffaloes and for a longer period. Calves of Jersey cows grow fast and within two years begin to yield milk whereas a buffalo calf takes five years. There are about 3000 Jersey cows in Bhongir taluka. It holds the third place in the number of cows in India. Poverty of the people persists as ever in spite of all these developments. Even the little apparent progress is not something worth mentioning.

Three main reasons are obvious. Firstly, the government has not only not given economic assistance to the people but made them victims of exploitation. For example the electricity rates eat away the entire produce of the peasants. Secondly, Bhongir taluka by itself is a drought-stricken area. Thirdly, the population has increased very much. The first one has already been elaborated whereas the second reason is due to natural factors. But the government has not moved in the direction of creating permanent irrigation sources. As for the third reason, the population of our village was 2500 before the police action whereas it is 5000 now. In spite of a certain improvement in the employment situation through the dairy scheme and in production, there is no real economic progress and development which we expected. The government harps on the population problem to hide its incompetence and reactionary nature.

With a few words about my family, I will conclude the story of my village. When I was a student my family had 3000 acres of land. We are four brothers amongst whom only my family was influenced by the Communist Party. I have a daughter and two sons. Out of my share of land I donated and distributed 500 acres to the people of the village in 1948 during the Telengana struggle for land. After this donation and sale my sons are left with land that normally a rich peasant would own. My daughter and sons are sympathisers of my party—the Communist Party. My daughter is educated and is a great source of strength to me in my old age. I have already mentioned that my wife Seeta Devi took part in political life along with me. This is the story of my village.

12. CONCLUSION

I am happy that I am able to convey my experiences and reminiscences to the readers through this book. For some time comrades, friends and relatives were pressing me to do this. I was also willing but due to old age and ill-health I was unable to fulfil it. I also felt my inability to undertake the work by myself without some help. Many a time I started writing but got tired and gave up.

The Communist Party of Andhra Pradesh has now decided to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Telengana people's armed struggle. It was felt that my memoirs in the form of a book was necessary. To this end I was extended all possible help.

In the preparation of this book Etukuri Prasad and Rambhatla Krishna Murthy under a directive of the party helped me in many ways. Gojjula Malla Reddy gave his valuable comments from time to time. I convey my heartfelt thanks to all of them.

I have used as the title for a chapter 'Heroic Telengana Mine, Not Separate Telengana' from a poem by Dr C. Narayan Reddy. I hope he has no objection.

This book had to be prepared in an extremely short time. Therefore there may be some mistakes and some gaps in remembering by political experiences of forty-five years. I have tried to recollect and bring out the chronological data as far as possible. During the period of struggle most records were destroyed and those that remained could not be traced. Therefore an accurate and elaborate description of some events has not been possible. I hope the readers will excuse me.

I have been a victim of ill-health right from my student days. This has chased me all my life. I worked very hard as an athlete and sportsman during my student days but I did not take

care to have good food. The reason is not economic but a lack of proper scientific guidance in those days. The political life after my student days also turned out to be quite tough. As a result I have been physically suffering all the time during the last forty-five years. This suffering is all the greater in old age. Without it I sometimes think I could have served the people more.

I have participated in a variety of movements except sectarian religious movements and organisations. I have worked along with liberals as well as extremists inside the Congress. I need hardly say anything about the Communist Party of which I am still a member. I have worked along with the presentday 'marxists' and naxalites. Naturally I have come into contact and known thousands of political workers. On this occasion when we are celebrating the silver jubilee of the Telengana armed struggle I convey my hearty greetings to all those who worked along with me in various movements.

My work and service may not be all that great. All the same the people of Telengana in general and Nalgonda in particular have shown their affection and regard for me. They sent me to the parliament twice and once to the assembly. Even in my retirement they continue to express their goodwill towards me which heartens me a great deal.

I chose an ideal in my life. That is scientific socialism. It is my firm conviction that socioeconomic and political problems of contemporary humanity can be resolved only through scientific socialism. I continue to hold the same conviction. During my entire life I never fell a prey to opportunism and selfishness. Viewed from this angle I feel my life has been worthy and successful. I would be immensely happy if my ideal and life experiences inspire and move the presentday younger generation.

I had a good opportunity to render service to the people in Hyderabad state. When I entered politics Hyderabad state was politically a barren land, unexposed to leftist politics. Therefore I had the opportunity to plough this land. I believe, in this endeavour I have achieved good results.

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